

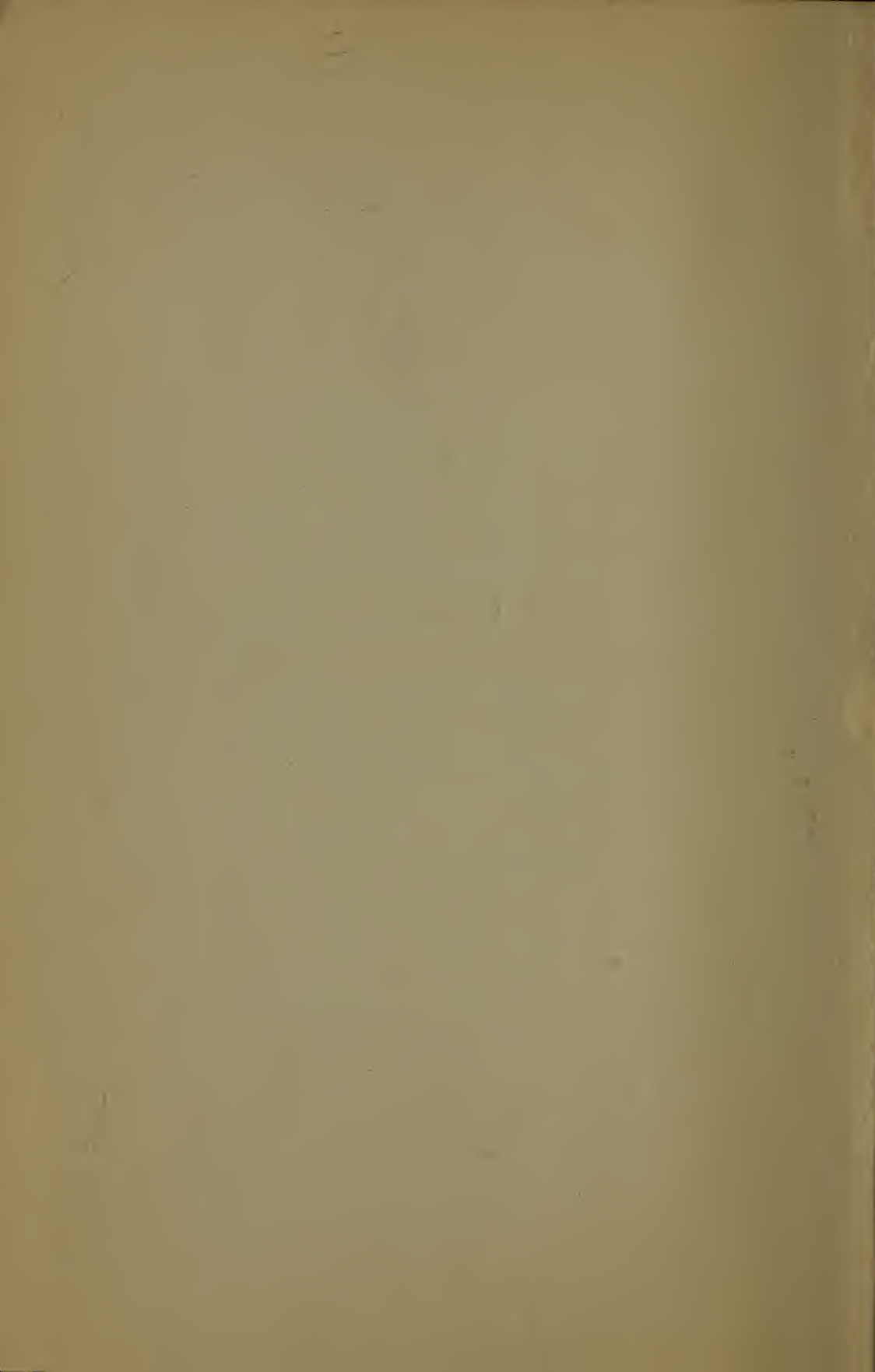


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**THE PRINCIPAL
CATHOLIC PRACTICES**

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
PRESS

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS



UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS
50 EAST LAKE STREET
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60607

THE PRINCIPAL CATHOLIC PRACTICES

A POPULAR EXPLANATION OF THE
SACRAMENTS AND CATHOLIC DEVOTIONS

BY

REV. GEORGE T. SCHMIDT



NEW YORK, CINCINNATI, CHICAGO

BENZIGER BROTHERS

PRINTERS TO THE
HOLY APOSTOLIC SEE

PUBLISHERS OF
BENZIGER'S MAGAZINE

1920

BX1969
.54

Nihil Obstat.

ARTHUR J. SCANLAN, S.T.D.,

Censor Librorum.

Imprimatur.

✠ PATRICK J. HAYES, D.D.,

Archbishop of New York.

NEW YORK, APRIL 22, 1920

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NOV 19 1920

no 1

EMB 22 Nov. 1970.

PREFACE

MY association with converts has taught me that they are so much happier in the True Faith if they are familiar with the devotions and practices that are essentially Catholic. Experience has also demonstrated that not a few who were born and reared in the Faith betray a lack of thorough instruction, or have simply forgotten the meanings and purposes of many Catholic practices.

For such readers I have endeavored to gather in the following pages the most salient features of Catholic life. My aim has been to give interesting and profitable reading in plain words. And thus I hope that this book will find favor with all classes of Catholics.

In our busy American life we lose so easily our hold on the things that are eternal. There is, therefore, all the more need that from time

Preface

to time we refresh our souls with the contemplation of the service, the wealth of consolation, and the brilliant hopes for the future which are afforded us by the beautiful devotions and practices of our religion.

THE AUTHOR.

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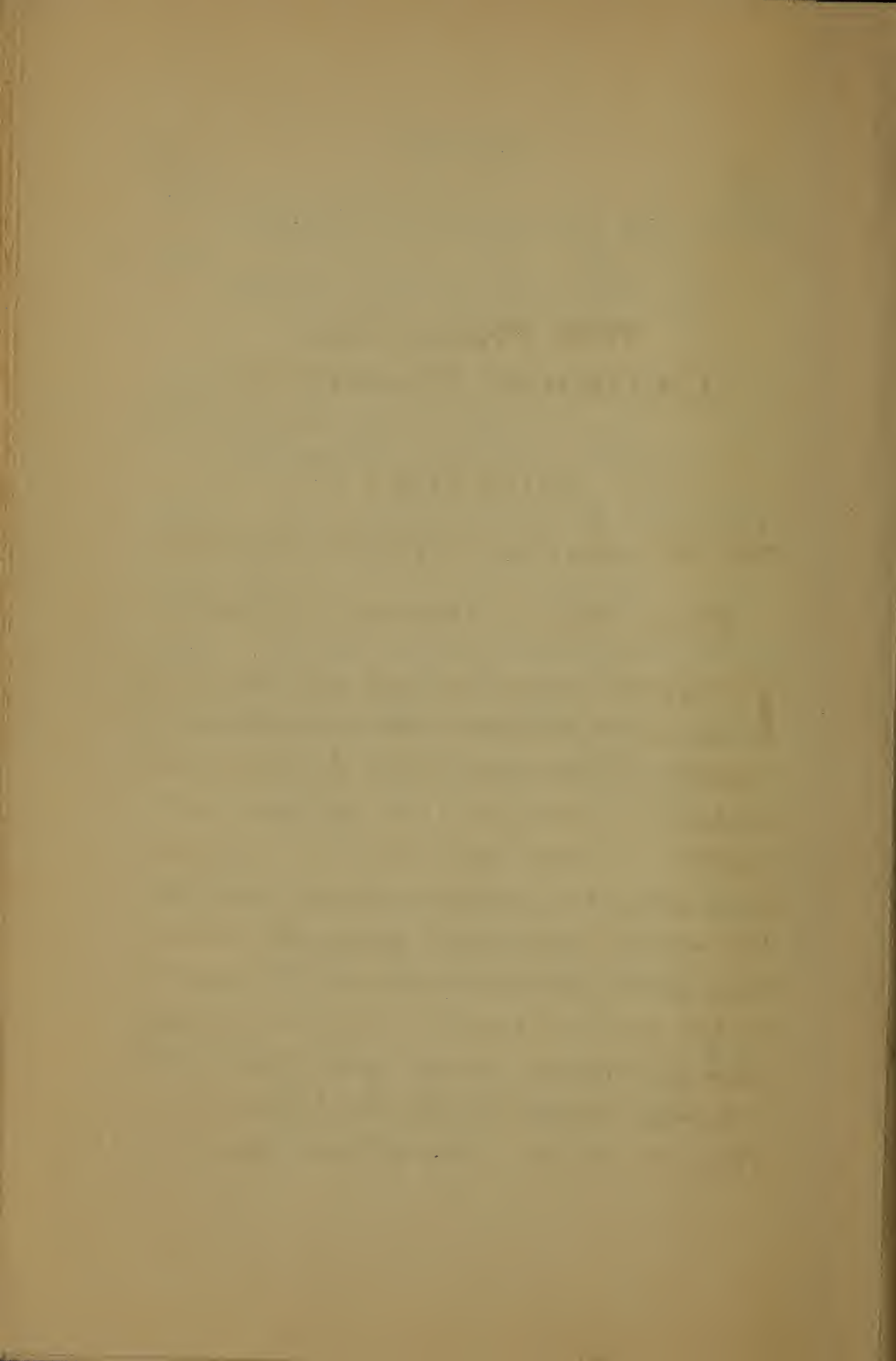
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THE PRINCIPAL CATHOLIC PRACTICES

CHAPTER I

THE FIRST AND MOST NECESSARY SACRAMENT

Private Baptism. Baptism in Church

IF Baptism is the first and most necessary sacrament, it follows that no child born of Catholic parents should suffer the loss of this sacrament on account of the ignorance or incapability of those who either fail to baptize it, or attempt to administer the rite invalidly. For we must know that a person who departs from this life unbaptized can never be admitted to the glory of heaven. And even though these unfortunates are not condemned to hell or to other punishment, their loss is irreparable. They have lost the vision of God. And even

12 *First and Most Necessary Sacrament*

heaven would be but a poor substitute for complete happiness without the Beatific Vision.

It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that we exercise great solicitude to insure the eternal happiness of our children through the proper administration of Baptism.

Now, when the child is born in good health and there is no immediate danger of death, the matter is very simple. We take the child to church and have it baptized by the priest. However, this is not always possible. Infants sometimes die immediately or shortly after birth. Others expire during delivery. Here we see the advisability of employing a conscientious Catholic physician to assist in parturition. For if there is great danger for the life of the child, the physician will probably be the least excitable of the attendants and can, in a moment, pour the saving water of Baptism. But many conscientious Protestant physicians have been known always to administer Baptism to the children of Catholic parents when in danger of death.

Let us now suppose that a case of urgent necessity presents itself. An infant, or for that matter an adult, is in great danger of death, and private Baptism is to be administered. Get some water at once. No need to search all over the house for that bottle of holy water; but take any clean water, pour it over the head of the person to be baptized, and *at the same time*—i.e., while pouring—say the words audibly: “*I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*” Remember, it will not suffice to sprinkle the child with water, or to dip the thumb in water and make the sign of the cross on the forehead. The water must be *poured* over the head so that it *flows*, and the formula must be pronounced at the same time.

If the illness of the child thus baptized is but temporary and it recovers sufficiently, it should be brought to church. Tell the priest of the private Baptism and acquaint him with the manner in which it was administered. If the rite was validly performed, he will not repeat

14 *First and Most Necessary Sacrament*

it, but will add the ceremonies that generally accompany the sacrament when administered in church.

When there is no immediate danger for the life of the child, and a resident priest is within a reasonable distance, it should be brought to him for Baptism. Courtesy would suggest that we inquire previously as to the time that is most suitable and convenient for the pastor. 9

One of the first things to do is to select good practical Catholics as sponsors for the child. It is immaterial whether or not the sponsors will be able to buy expensive presents for their godchild. The important question is, Will they, in the event that the child is orphaned, be capable of counseling it to a life in conformity with Catholic belief and practice?

About ten years ago the writer was called upon to baptize a child for which the fond parents had secured the services of a Jew as sponsor. The man may have been of unimpeachable character and in every way a gentle-

man, but he was utterly impossible as a sponsor for a Catholic child.

Having secured the sponsors, a matter of relative moment will be the choice of a name. Now let us get away from that modern un-Catholic practice of inflicting the names of stones, flowers, and villains upon defenseless children. We certainly have an abundance of Catholic names to draw from; and in selecting the name of a saint we are placing the child under the special protection of a friend of God. What better beginning could a human being make than to seek the aid of a powerful friend of God as a guide on the perilous journey through life. It used to be that you could know that a man was a Catholic by hearing his given name. Nowadays you can no more recognize his religion by his name than you can by the style of collar he wears. What can be the purpose in giving the outlandish modern names? Are they prettier? Not at all. But they are odd, you say, and not so common. True, they are odd; they are so un-

intelligible that they at once fasten upon the unfortunate bearer the stigma of oddity and lack of intelligence.

It will no doubt be interesting to know just what all the ceremonies mean that are employed by the priest in Baptism. First of all, you will observe that in the beginning of the rite the candidate either remains in the vestibule or at the rear of the church. This is to signify that as yet he is not a Catholic and must first be initiated into the society of the Church. The priest puts the question: "What dost thou ask of the Church of God?" The sponsor answers, "Faith." The next question is: "What does faith bring thee to?" The answer, "Life everlasting." We now have the intention of the candidate to receive the sacrament signified by those who speak in his place.

The priest proceeds to proclaim the divine mandate of love of God and neighbor. He then breathes lightly three times over the face of the child and charges the evil spirit to leave it and give place to the Holy Ghost.

Thereupon he blesses the candidate on the forehead and breast that he may in truth be a temple of God. Now the salt is blessed, and a morsel thereof placed upon the tongue of the child with the words: "Receive the salt of wisdom; may it render thee favorable for life everlasting." This prayer is enlarged upon in the oration (prayer) that follows.

Special attention should be given to the solemn words of the exorcism of the next ceremony: "I exorcise thee, unclean spirit, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, that thou leave and depart from this servant of God. For, cursed damned one, He Himself commands thee who walked the seas and held forth His right hand to the sinking Peter.

"Therefore, thou cursed devil, know thy sentence, and give honor to the true and living God, give honor to Jesus Christ His Son, and to the Holy Ghost, and depart from this servant of God, for God Himself and Our Lord Jesus Christ has called him to His holy grace

18 *First and Most Necessary Sacrament*

and blessing and to the fount of Baptism.”

The priest again blesses the child on the forehead and, extending his hand over its head, invokes the divine benediction. You will now observe that he places the end of his stole upon the infant, which signifies that the candidate is to be admitted into the Church. His words are to this effect; namely, “Enter into the temple of God that thou mayest have part in Christ in life eternal.”

We now accompany the priest and sponsors with the candidate to the baptismal font. On the way the priest and sponsors, in an audible voice, recite the *Apostles' Creed* and the *Our Father*. Upon arriving near the baptistery the priest pronounces the exorcism: “I exorcise thee, every evil spirit, in the name of the Father, omnipotent God, and in the name of Jesus Christ His Son and Our Lord and Judge, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, that thou depart from this creature of God whom Our Lord has deigned to call to His

holy temple, that he may become a temple of the living God and that the Holy Ghost may live in him. Through the same Christ Our Lord, who will come to judge the living and the dead and the world by fire. Amen.”

What follows may seem strange to us. We see the priest moisten his thumb with spittle from his mouth and touch the ears and nostrils of the candidate. Do you remember when Our Saviour mixed the spittle of His mouth with the dust of the earth, and applied the mixture to the ears of one who was deaf and dumb? He, in miraculously curing the man before Him, pronounced the words: “Ephpheta, which is, Be thou opened.” These same words are used by the priest in the ceremony just mentioned. The senses of the candidate should become receptive to the sweetness of God’s holy religion.

What follows is the declaration of enmity with Satan and his works. The priest asks: “Dost thou renounce Satan?”

20 *First and Most Necessary Sacrament*

The sponsors answer: "I do renounce him."

Q. "And all his works?"

A. "I do renounce them."

Q. "And all his pomps?"

A. "I do renounce them."

Then the priest anoints the infant in the form of a cross with the oil of Catechumens upon the breast and between the shoulders saying: "I mark thee with the oil of salvation in Christ Our Lord, that thou mayest have life eternal. Amen."

And now we are brought face to face with the reasonableness of demanding practical Catholics as sponsors; for they must make the profession of faith in place of the child. The following are the questions and answers:

Q. "Dost thou believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth?"

A. "I do believe."

Q. "Dost thou believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son Our Lord, who was born and who suffered for us?"

A. "I do believe."

Q. Dost thou also believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?"

A. "I do believe."

Q. "Wilt thou be baptized?"

A. "I will."

If the child has been previously baptized in private, the sacrament is not repeated. Otherwise the child is held over the font and the priest pours the baptismal water over its head, at the same time saying the words as in private Baptism.

Immediately after baptizing, the priest anoints the crown of the head of the infant with holy chrism, saying the words: "May God Almighty, Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who has generated thee from water and the Holy Ghost, and who has given thee remission of all thy sins, mark thee with the chrism of salvation in the same Christ Jesus Our Lord for life everlasting. Amen."

22 *First and Most Necessary Sacrament*

Taking a white linen cloth, which is at hand for the purpose, he places it upon the baptized child, pronouncing the words: "Receive this white garment, which mayest thou carry without stain before the judgment seat of Our Lord Jesus Christ, that thou mayest have life everlasting. Amen." This garment or linen cloth symbolizes the garment of sanctifying grace with which the soul of the child has been clothed in Baptism.

Then the priest gives the sponsor a lighted candle, charging him as follows: "Receive this burning light and keep thy Baptism so as to be without blame: observe the commandments of God, that when Our Lord shall come to His nuptials, thou mayest meet Him together with all the saints in the heavenly court, and mayest have eternal life and live forever and ever. Amen. Go in peace, and the Lord be with thee. Amen."

In the light of the foregoing, must it not be confessed that the Church has surrounded this, the first and most important sacrament, with

very beautiful and expressive ceremonies? Indeed, the initiation into no lodge or society can compare with the pregnant ceremonies employed by the Church in Baptism.

CHAPTER II

SOLDIERS OF THE KING

Confirmation. Preparation

WHEN the patient Job declared that "life is a battle," his words were not merely applicable to the struggle of human beings for their daily sustenance. He who had suffered as no other from the cunning of the evil spirit knew that he spoke of a great warfare that is being carried on between the powers of darkness and the children of Light.

Ever since that saddest day in the history of the world when the first man and woman turned away from the sweet joy of God's friendship to hearken to the crafty appeal of the serpent ever since God Himself declared enmity between the Mother of the Redeemer and Satan, a bitter war has been waged be-

tween God's elect and Satan's minions. It may be called a war of revenge. But from the standpoint of hell it is also a war of conquest. Christ, the Son of God, died in order to save human beings from eternal perdition. Satan has marshaled all his forces to frustrate the fruits of Redemption. Foremost in his battle array are the countless angels who with him plunged down from the celestial heights to the newly created hell. But vast numbers of human beings also march behind his banner and are allied with him in his foul determination to vanquish the hosts of Christ.

It might be interesting to note the weapons that are used by these enemies of the human race. There is first of all the lie. It was a lie that brought about the sin of Eve, a lie so cunningly insinuated that this woman of keen intellect and wondrous wisdom failed to see its sophistry. Now what is the chief weapon of Satan's army to-day? Is it not the lie? Is it not by crafty deception that men and women by the thousands are led to believe that the

Church of God is a hideous Beast? Is it not through satanic suggestion that human beings consider that they serve God and are even god-like if they persecute Catholics? It is the old story over again: "You will be like unto God if you eat of this fruit."

The lie is the most powerful means of offense in the black leader's hand. But he securely hides his weapon behind treachery, cunning, hate, and bigotry.

Truly, the army of Christ faces a terrible and ruthless foe. There is no quarter to be expected from him. Victory, peace, and happiness can come only by completely crushing our adversary. But what are our weapons? The truth is our first and greatest weapon. It is not an instrument that we must hide. Rather its blade should be brandished aloft so that the sun's rays may be reflected in the brightness of its sheen.

But even as the foe's chief weapon, the lie, must be hidden by hatred, bigotry, and hypocrisy, so our main hope of victory, the truth,

must be raised aloft by prudence, wisdom, fortitude, and knowledge.

The soldier of Christ must, therefore, be well accoutred for the battle before he enters the ranks of Christian soldiers. In Baptism he receives his uniform, the garb of grace; but in Confirmation he is fully equipped for battle. Those priceless gifts of the Holy Ghost which gave to Peter and the other apostles a wondrous courage, which made strong giants of cringing cowards, and intellectual marvels of ignorant fishermen—those same gifts are bestowed upon the young soldier of Christ in Confirmation. The Holy Ghost, the all-powerful Comforter, is the divine power behind the sacrament of Confirmation.

If, then, this sacrament plays so important a rôle in the life of a Christian, it is of paramount importance that a worthy preparation precede its reception.

As was said before, Baptism gives the soldier his uniform. But no one would think of giving weapons to the soldier who lies dead in

the tomb of mortal sin. Therefore it is necessary that the candidates for Confirmation be in the state of sanctifying grace. The most reasonable preparation is confession and holy communion. His uniform renovated, and nourished with the Food that will sustain him in the hardest battle, he is prepared to be invested with the gifts of the Holy Ghost, with Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety, and Fear of the Lord. It goes without saying that the proper preparation for the sacrament of the Holy Ghost demands earnest prayer and meditation.

Thus, when the bishop proceeds to the administration of the sacrament, his first act is one of prayer. He extends his hands over the persons to be confirmed, and begs the Holy Ghost to bestow upon them His sevenfold gifts.

You will now observe that the bishop goes to each candidate separately and, laying the four fingers of the right hand upon his head, uses the thumb to anoint him on the forehead

with chrism. The sign of the cross on the forehead is the badge of the Christian soldier. Whilst anointing, the bishop pronounces the words: "I sign thee with the sign of the cross and I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

Then the bishop gives the candidate a slight blow on the cheek, saying: "Peace be with thee." In the early Christian ages the kiss of peace was given. The slight tap takes the place of the kiss; but it also reminds the soldier that he must be prepared to undergo hardships for the sake of his Lord and Leader.

Do you remember reading in the Acts of the Apostles (viii. 11-17) that St. Peter and St. John went to Samaria to lay their hands upon the converted Christians? They as bishops administered the sacrament of Confirmation to those who had been baptized. In those days the recipients of this sacrament at once gave evidence of the graces of the Holy Ghost. For they spoke strange languages and per-

formed many miracles. That was to be expected. The Church was soon to spread the doctrine of the Redeemer throughout the world. Preaching alone would not have accomplished this. It was, therefore, necessary for the first teachers to be able to give substantial proof of their divine mission. Just as you carefully water a plant when it is first set out, but when it is firmly rooted allow nature to provide, so also God gave the gift of tongues and the power to perform miracles to the first Christians until the tree of Faith had taken strong root in the soil of the earth.

As our mind turns back to the early Christian ages, we are not only amazed at the powers granted to the faithful through Confirmation, but we also marvel at their courage and fortitude in upholding the Faith. Delicate maidens and little boys defy cruel tyrants. Even though they see the instruments of torture before them, even though they hear the crackling of the burning coals that are being prepared to roast their tender flesh, even though they

hear the ominous snarls of the beasts that are waiting to devour them—they refuse to save their lives by denying their Faith.

If in those days, when the army of Satan was so numerous and the soldiers of Christ so few, the defenders of the truth manifested such dauntless courage and such unshaken loyalty to the cross, then we to-day, with our vast array of millions, with the truth as our greatest weapon, and strengthened by the gifts of the Holy Ghost, should move forward against Satan and his minions as a power that knows no obstacle, an army marching on to assured victory, to glory and eternal triumph.

CHAPTER III

GOING TO CONFESSION

Preparation. Contrition. Accusation.
Scrupulous Conscience

I AM going to confession. With what varied emotions these words are uttered! To some the thought of going to confession is very consoling, for it brings with it the definite conviction that they will be purified in the holy sacrament and that God's sweet peace will descend upon their hearts. But not a few look forward to confession as a great trial attended by nerve-wrecking worries and fears.

It is for the purpose of making confession easy and consoling to all who read the following pages, that they are written.

In the first place, a good confession, one that eases the conscience, postulates a suitable

preparation. It is not a vain and ineffectual practice to go to confession. But it is that great and momentous undertaking whereby the creature, with suppliant knee and contrite heart, begs the Creator for forgiveness of the sins that condemn him to eternal hell. It is that sublime act of divine love wherein the almighty God stoops down to His erring subject, raises him from his knees, and clasps him to His bosom in fatherly forgiveness. Truly, then, this sacrament is worthy of most conscientious preparation.

Because we are dealing directly with God—for after all the priest is only God's vicar—it is becoming that we seek the aid of the Holy Spirit so that we may properly place our cause before the Most High.

We now review our past life since our last worthy confession. Some people prefer to follow the commandments of God and the precepts of the Church in examining their conscience. And this is perhaps the easiest method. Others, especially those who fre-

quently receive the sacrament of Penance, find it more convenient to review their daily activities at work, in the home, and in company. In examining the conscience, the sins that are known to be mortal sins—i.e., transgressions of the law of God committed with full knowledge, free will, and in an important matter—should be remembered with numbers and any circumstances that render the sins more grievous. Thus, for instance, a sin of impurity committed with a relative adds to the crime the guilt of incest.

It is not at all necessary that we consume hours in examining our conscience. For the person who approaches the sacrament monthly, fifteen minutes will prove to be ample time for a conscientious examination.

When you have thoroughly searched your soul for the sins that render it displeasing to God, you should not at once rush into the confessional; but you should first make a good act of contrition; i.e., an act of deep sorrow for your sins, with the firm purpose of amend-

ing your life and atoning for wrongs done.

In the writer's experience as a confessor he has observed that great numbers go to the confessional without having previously made an act of contrition. They seemed to think that contrition expressed by them after the recital of sins is ample and sufficient for the requirements of the sacrament. And indeed it would be if we could be certain that what we were saying was really an act of contrition, an act of sincere sorrow such as is demanded for the worthy reception of the sacrament. But, have you not often found that after the priest had given you a penance, your thoughts were clinging to the words of his counsel, or were busied with parts of your accusation? How could you hope to make a good act of contrition under these circumstances? Besides, the time between the actual confession of guilt and the absolution by the priest is so short that only those who frequently make an act of contrition will be able to do so in the brief time allotted them. Therefore it is urgently advised that

we strive to excite a real sorrow for our sins before we approach the confessional.

Theologians distinguish between *perfect* and *imperfect* contrition. As far as the pain of sorrow in our hearts is concerned, it may be equally great in either case. But the motive, that which makes us feel sorry, is what renders the quality of contrition perfect or imperfect.

Ordinarily we would not feel sorry for our sins, for our fallen nature is inclined to sin, and actually believes it is acquiring a good by sinning. But an act of contrition is not guided by any natural motive, but by a supernatural one. If that motive is the fear of God's punishment, the fear of hell, purgatory, or some temporal visitation of the Lord in life, we at once see that the motive is selfish. We are not so much concerned about God's offended dignity as about the welfare of our body and soul. And because our motive is less noble, our contrition is imperfect. However, such contrition suffices for the sacrament of Penance.

But where is the genuine Catholic who is

satisfied with imperfect contrition? It should be our aim to make our contrition perfect. It is made perfect by the motive. We are heartily sorry for our sins and firmly determined not to commit them again, not merely because we fear punishment, but because we realize that we have been wretchedly ungrateful to a merciful and loving Father. Our mind recounts the great manifestations of God's love for man. We see again the hardships and privations of Bethlehem; our fancy recalls the terrible tragedy of Calvary. As we see the God-man hanging on the cross, reviled and insulted by His tormentors, suffering the most excruciating pain, we ask Him, "Why, O God, dost Thou endure so much? Couldst Thou not descend from the cross and confound Thy enemies?" And He answers us: "I cannot, for a greater power than steel and iron holds me fast—it is love." In order to save me from everlasting pain in hell my Saviour took upon Himself the cruel torture of the passion, and that in spite of the fact that He clearly fore-

saw my sins and black ingratitude. Can we behold this magnanimous love of God for us and not be stirred to the very depths of our soul? Can we accept this unbounded love and not return our affection? In the light of love the hideousness and foulness of our sins stand out in all their hatefulness. We see the disgusting ingratitude of our hearts; we determine never again to offend our loving God; our being is truly filled with love—we have perfect contrition. How much the more purifying and consoling will our confession be if we earnestly strive to make an act of perfect contrition!

We then approach the holy tribunal of penance to acknowledge our sins. With the humble "Bless me Father, for I have sinned," we prostrate ourselves before our confessor and sincerely and completely tell the sins as we know them, being careful not to exaggerate nor minimize their guilt. The willful omission of one mortal sin renders our confession incomplete and therefore unworthy. The fear of be-

traying the inmost secrets of our heart should not influence the integrity of our accusation, for we know that the priest is bound by the seal of confession, and may not under any circumstances whatsoever betray the least of our sins.

Having confessed our sins, we humbly give our attention to the counsel of the priest, willingly accept whatever penance he imposes, and when he raises his hand preparing to speak the words of omnipotence absolving us from our crimes, we may renew our contrition.

But some one will say: "That is all very well as far as it goes, but priests are not always so kind and fatherly. They are sometimes very irascible and find fault with everything, so that confession becomes a dreadful ordeal."

It is true, some priests make confession hard for their penitents. This may be due to several reasons, chief among which is the fact that priests are human beings subject to fatigue and the weaknesses of human nature. If one or the other penitent finds confession to be a

dreadful ordeal, you may be sure that it is no sinecure for the priest, who must sit and listen to hundreds. And if the priest seems stern and exacting, he may only be zealous for your soul's welfare, for perhaps he realizes that indulgence and the utter failure to set you aright may be the means of repeated unworthy confessions and your ultimate damnation. One thing is certain, he will do you no bodily harm, for a screen separates penitent from confessor. If he seems to be unduly exercised over your failings, remember that his severity would be but mildly comparable to the sternness and anger of the just God had you died in the state of mortal sin.

But really there is a class of people for whom confession is a great trial, not merely because of the sternness of the priest, but also because they leave the confessional dissatisfied and without that peace of heart that should go with a good confession. I refer to those afflicted with a scrupulous conscience. The desire to avoid everything sinful and to confess all our

failings with exactness is not termed scrupulousness. That is merely conscientiousness. But the constant wavering between right and wrong; the fear of sinning where others do not think of sin; the desire to repeat sins over and over again—these are the signs of scrupulousness. Those who are thus afflicted also would like to go from the confessional with peace in their hearts and their minds at rest. For their benefit the following is written.

First of all, you must know that scrupulousness is not a fault; rather it is a disease; and in many cases is curable. It may be due to disorders of the nervous system arising from the improper functioning of certain organs of the body. Realizing that it is a disease of the soul, it is your duty to try to cure the malady. Now the physician of the soul is the priest. To him you must go, and place yourself absolutely under his guidance. He will undertake to cure you under one condition; that is, that you promise to obey him in all things. If he says not more than fifteen minutes are to be con-

sumed in examining your conscience, you must obey. If he tells you not to repeat your former confessions or sins of your past life, you must not attempt to do so. If you have disobeyed him, do not go to some strange priest to conceal your disobedience; but go to your regular confessor, admit your fault, and renew your promise of obedience.

But why this absolute obedience to the confessor, even when he tells us to do that which apparently seems to be a carelessness in making our confession? First, because the scrupulous person has not a reliable conscience, and you may be sure that the priest, who is eminently qualified to direct him, will not suggest anything that militates against true conscientiousness. Secondly, common sense tells us that we cannot expect a cure if we act contrary to the directions of our physician. The priests of the Church have had much experience with scrupulous penitents; they have studied the disease, and know the most reliable remedies.

But the scrupulous person himself can aid materially in bringing about a rapid cure. He should not shun company, but should seek out the society of good people and mingle freely with them. He should have plenty of exercise in the open air. Cold sponge-baths and electrical massages are also of great value in restoring a healthy condition to the body, which makes for a healthy mind.

Above all, do not despair. Rather accept your cross willingly from the hand of God in atonement for the sins of your past life. Pray daily that God may grant you the grace to bear your cross and eventually be relieved of it.

Following this advice most scrupulous penitents will live to see the day when for them, too, confession will be a great gift of God and the instrument of sweet consolation and peace of heart.

CHAPTER IV

ATTENDING MASS

A Great Privilege. The Ceremonies of the Mass

WHEN on that memorable first Good Friday the sacrifice of the new Law was offered on the cross, the veil of the temple at Jerusalem was rent, signifying the passing of the Old Testament with its numerous bloody and unbloody sacrifices. Henceforth from the rising of the sun unto the setting thereof a clean oblation was to be offered to the name of God. The sacrifice of the Mass, the renewal of the sacrifice of Our Saviour on the Cross, is daily offered in thousands of churches and in every land of the globe. Whether the scene be a wretched hut erected of clay and rushes or that magnificent pile of stone and marble, St.

Peter's at Rome, the sublime act of worship is everywhere the same. At St. Peter's, where Mass is celebrated amid the glow of many burning candles, surrounded by the masterpieces of the world's greatest artists, enhanced by the historic relics that lend added distinction to the superb basilica—the reverence and fervor of the faithful is no greater than in the little mission shack where the priest has erected a temporary altar of rough boards, where but two candles burn and bare walls loudly proclaim the little congregation's poverty. It is not the external magnificence and splendor that attracts the people. It is the Holy Sacrifice itself.

Our imagination may soar to lofty regions in search of the sublime and majestic, but it cannot picture to us anything more noble than the sacrifice of the Mass. Poor human beings who boast of no more honorable ancestry than the dust of the street kneel down in humble adoration, whether it be in St. Peter's at Rome or in the poor country church, and upon the

altar God is offering Himself! God, omnipotent Creator of the universe, Maker of the angels and of men, God magnificent, Source of all beauty and joy, offers Himself as sacrificial victim for the poor mortals surrounding the altar! Sublime? It beggars description. Wonderful? The most astounding miracle of all times.

And mark well, we are not compelled to stand at a great distance with separating walls to bar us from actual participation in this great mystery. The poorest of us may confidently prostrate himself before the altar. Oh, what a glorious privilege it is to be allowed to attend Mass, to come so close to that sacred spot where invisible angels adore their Lord and God! Nay, more, the sacrifice offered is for us, and we directly participate in its bountiful fruits. A world was redeemed by the sacrifice of the cross, and great merit was stored up in the spiritual treasury of the Church. Every renewal of that sacrifice pours forth upon the world countless blessings and favors of God.

These are in particular showered upon the priest, those for whom the Mass is said, and those who attend devoutly. Was there ever so blessed a privilege as that extended to the humblest Catholic?

Because of the grandeur and lofty significance of the sacred rite, a certain etiquette is asked of Catholics which is not demanded of the worshipers in non-Catholic churches.

As we enter a Catholic church we bend the knee in adoration of Him who unceasingly dwells in the tabernacle. Our conversation is limited to the absolutely necessary. We realize that we are in the court of the King, and that here is no place for levity.

When the priest, garbed in the vestments prescribed by the Church, enters the sanctuary and ascends the altar to begin the exalted act of worship, we strive to unite our intention with his; namely, to renew the sacrifice of the cross.

For those thoroughly instructed in the meaning of the various parts of the Mass, no prayer-book would be needed. If they were sincere

in their endeavor to partake in the great sacrifice, their hearts would send forth endless aspirations and pious thoughts to make the Mass most fruitful for them. But in view of the frailty of human nature, it is well to have a prayer-book at hand. Thank God, there is no dearth of good books of devotion. Father Lasance has compiled a number of very helpful books dealing with the profound mystery of the Holy Eucharist. Then there is "The New Missal for Every Day" intended for all who would like to follow the Sacred Rites as it were step by step, and word by word and which can be obtained from any Catholic bookseller.

Let us now briefly accompany the actions of the priest through the Mass. I say briefly, for it will be apparent that in a book of this kind it would be impossible to give a thorough explanation of the Mass.

After the celebrant has opened the Missal he descends to the foot of the altar. With eyes cast down in humble recognition of his un-

worthiness to look up to heaven, he begs God to purify his heart and make him worthy to enter the Holy of Holies. And with head bowed in deep contrition he confesses his guilt in the *Confiteor*.

From the preparation at the foot of the altar he arises with unbounded trust in the mercy of God, ascends the altar steps, and stoops to kiss the center of the altar table. This first kissing of the altar is intended in an especial manner as a veneration of the relics of saints. For we must know that in every altar upon which the holy sacrifice of the Mass is offered, there is an altar stone in which relics of martyrs and saints are enclosed.

Proceeding to the right of the altar and making the sign of the cross, the priest begins the *Introit* (Entrance) of the Mass. Now the *Introit*, *Epistle*, and *Gospel* are not always the same. They are variable according to the nature of the day in the Church calendar. Nor are these first prayers and readings from the Bible to be taken as an integral part of

the sacrifice. Rather their purpose is by suggesting pious thoughts and wholesome aspirations to prepare the priest and the faithful for the tremendous mystery that is to follow.

The *Kyrie Eleison* and *Christe Eleison* that follow immediately after the *Introit* are Greek words, and signify "Lord, have mercy on us; Christ, have mercy on us."

The *Gloria in excelsis Deo et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis* is the angelic hymn which in part was given us by the angels announcing the happy tidings of the birth of the Saviour. It has been added to by the Fathers of the Church, and to-day is a magnificent hymn of praise to the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity.

After the *Gloria*—or, if it is omitted, after the *Kyrie*—the priest proceeds to the right of the altar to say the oration (prayer) of the day. Sometimes two, three, and five orations are said accordingly as the liturgy calls for a feast of greater or lesser degree. These orations are called *Collects*, from an old custom of collect-

ing the people before proceeding to the station where the Mass was to be said. They contain petitions to God for the faithful through the intercession of the saint whose feast is celebrated; or, if it be a feast in honor of any of the three Divine Persons, His power is invoked.

Then follows the *Epistle* on the same side of the altar and the *Gospel* on the left side. These are extracts from the Bible. The former being usually parts of letters of the apostles or selections from the prophets; the latter are episodes from the narrations of the Gospel-writers, or evangelists.

On certain days the Gospel is followed by the *Credo*. The *Credo* is our profession of faith; for in concise and pregnant phrasing it contains all the truths of our religion. There are many symbols of faith, and all are built upon the first, the Apostles' Creed. The one used in the liturgy of the Mass is called the Nicene Creed, because the definition of the Council of Nice (325) concerning the divinity

of Christ is given therein almost word for word. This profession of faith occupies a most logical position in the Mass. For in the Gospel we hear the Word of God, which demands faith from us. Our Credo is therefore an echo to the call of God.

We now approach the real sacrificial action. Priest and people have been well prepared by the foregoing; and with holy thoughts in their hearts they may now approach the great mystery. Since the Mass is not only an offering and consecration, but also the consumption of the Sacrificial Victim, the Mass easily divides itself into three main parts:

1. The Offertory,
2. The Consecration,
3. The Communion.

1. *The Offertory.* After reciting the antiphon of the Offertory the priest uncovers the chalice, and first offers the host of bread and then the chalice with wine. It has always been customary for the faithful to make some offer-

ing at this time. Originally they brought bread and wine, from which the priest selected the materials for the sacrifice. Our custom of taking up the collection at the time of the Offertory is but a reminder of ancient usage.

Concerning the nature of the bread and wine offered, we cannot here go into a lengthy explanation. Suffice it to say that the bread must be unleavened and made of pure wheat-flour. (In the Greek rite, leavened bread is permitted.) The wine must be the pure juice of the grape, and must be beyond the stage of fermentation.

Holding up the *patena* with the host, and for a moment raising his eyes heavenward, the priest implores the almighty God to accept this oblation, which he, unworthy though he be, offers in propitiation for his own sins, for the transgressions of the faithful who are present, and for all members of the Church living and dead.

We see him next at the right side of the altar, where he pours wine and a little water into the

chalice. The mixture of water and wine symbolizes the two natures in Christ. Returning to the center of the altar, the priest raises the chalice with wine, saying the words: "We offer Thee, O Lord, the chalice of salvation, while we earnestly beg Thy mercy that it may ascend to the face of Thy Majesty with the odor of sweetness unto our salvation and that of the whole world." And bowing profoundly with folded hands resting upon the altar he humbly offers himself and the faithful to God in order that the sacrifice may be pleasing to the Lord.

The priest goes to the right of the altar where the ceremonial of washing the hands is performed. This again reminds the priest that the greatest purity of heart is demanded of him. Returning again to the center of the altar, he bows in prayer for a moment, and turning toward the congregation exhorts all to pray: "*Orate, Fratres*"—"Pray, Brethren." The servers at the altar respond in the name of the people, begging the Almighty to

deign to accept the priest's sacrifice for the glory of God and for the welfare of the whole Church.

The oration called the *Secret* (because said in a low tone) is said, and we come to the direct preparation for the solemn and ineffable act of consecration.

2. *The Consecration.* The sacred rite thus far was replete with beauty and significance; but now we stand on the threshold of the tremendous action that brings the Son of God upon the altar with flesh and blood, with humanity and divinity.

We read in Holy Scripture that Our Lord thanked God before consecrating the bread and wine. In like manner the priest sings the *Preface*, the wonderful hymn of thanksgiving. It has been said by some great musician that the Preface of the Mass is the most beautiful piece of music that ever was written. Certain it is that the words of the Preface are replete with lofty and holy thoughts. This noble hymn of praise concludes with the "*Sanctus*,

Sanctus, Sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth—
“Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts.”

After the joyous *Hosanna* has subsided, a solemn silence sets in—we have come to the *Canon* of the Mass. The Canon signifies the unalterable rule by which the sacred rite of consecration must be undertaken. The subdued tone of voice used by the priest indicates that this is the act of the celebrant alone. The prayers said are at times petitions to God for His blessing and for the great miracle of transubstantiation; then again they are pleas that the sacred rite may be fruitful for the living and the dead.

After the priest has said the third oration of the Canon, he proceeds to the act of consecration. Let us hear the beautiful prayer that precedes the act: “We beg Thee, O God, to deign to make this offering blessed in all things, true to precept and acceptable so that it may become the body and blood of Thy most beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The celebrant then takes the host of bread in

his hands, blesses it and bows over it, saying the words of Christ: "*Hoc est enim Corpus meum*"—"For this is My body." Oh, God, how unfathomable are Thy mysteries! A priest of human clay, by the power bestowed upon him in ordination, changes bread into the living body of the Son of God! He bends his knee in adoration and raises the Sacred Host to be adored by the people, and laying it upon the linen corporal again adores.

Taking the chalice, he blesses it and says the second part of the act of Consecration: "*Hic est enim Calix Sanguinis mei, novi et aeterni testamenti, mysterium fidei, qui pro vobis et pro multis effundetur in remissionem peccatorum.*" "For this is the chalice of My blood, of the new and eternal testament, the mystery of faith, which will be shed for you and for many for the remission of sins."

The invisible angels who fill the sanctuary prostrate themselves before the altar in adoration of the King of kings who reigns in their midst.

The prayers that immediately follow the Consecration are prayers of oblation, offering to God the magnificent Sacrificial Victim. The essence of the sacrifice is completed. But even as the preparation for the great act was rich in spiritual treasures, so the Church leads the Mass to its conclusion by weaving a garland of most beautiful ceremonies to crown the Spotless Lamb.

Before the Consecration the priest had prayed in a special memento for the living. Shortly after the action we find him again bowed in prayer with hands folded at his breast. He is begging God to make the souls of the faithful departed partakers of the fruits of the sacrifice. And again as he strikes his breast and audibly says "*Nobis quoque peccatoribus*" he pleads for the living. A short oration closes the Canon and we proceed to the preparation for Communion.

3. *The Communion.* The Holy Eucharist is essentially a sacrifice that is to be eaten. And thus the third principal part of the Mass

is the Communion. What better preparation could we have for this feast of love than the prayer which Our Lord taught us? And thus we find the priest saying the *Pater Noster*, the Our Father.

Shortly after the recital of the Lord's Prayer we see the priest taking the Sacred Host and breaking it into three parts the smallest of which is put into the chalice containing the Most Precious Blood. This little liturgical act signifies and symbolizes the destruction of the Lamb which was tortured and crushed on Calvary.

From now on the preparation for the Communion is essentially a cry for peace. Thrice the priest says the *Agnus Dei*—"Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world." Twice he concludes the invocation with "Have mercy on us"; but the third time we hear "Grant us peace." The Holy Eucharist is preëminently the sacrament of peace. It brings peace; but also demands peace among the faithful if they would receive it worthily.

The three succeeding orations said by the priest, as he humbly bows over the Sacred Species, are his direct preparation for holy communion. Even at this solemn moment he begs God that the sacrament which he is about to receive may not be to his eternal damnation. We see here with what care and devotion we must prepare for the entrance of the Lord God into our hearts.

After the Sacred Host and the Precious Blood have been consumed, the third principal part of the Mass is completed. The priest is purifying his hands and the chalice with water and wine. Again he goes to the right of the altar, where the Communion antiphon is said and subsequently the oration, which is similar in construction to the first oration of the Mass.

Returning to the middle of the altar, and after announcing to the congregation that the Mass is finished—“*Ite, Missa est*”—he prays God to accept the sacrifice just offered; and turns to bless the people. The very last action in the Mass is the reading of the Gospel,

usually a selection from the first chapter of St. John proclaiming the divinity of Christ.

During the Mass you will observe that the priest frequently turns to the congregation with the words: "*Dominus vobiscum*"—"The Lord be with you"; the servers answering in the name of the faithful: "*Et cum spiritu tuo*"—"And with thy spirit." It is this oft-repeated greeting and response that binds the priest and people together in the offering of the sacrifice.

In the light of this brief explanation of the great mystery, can we wonder that the sacrifice of the Mass is the main doctrine of Christian worship? And can we be amazed that a reverential silence and great devotion is demanded of the faithful? Deprive us of the Holy Sacrifice, and you take away the life-blood of our religion; forbid its celebration, and priests will risk their lives to offer it as they have done many times in the years of persecution. For the sacrifice of the Mass is the most glorious boon that God has bestowed

upon the human race; it is the one great means of holding back the avenging hand of God when individuals and nations ruthlessly trample upon His commandments. For in this sacrifice, from sunrise to sunset, day after day the Son of God is pleading with the Father for human beings.

CHAPTER V

INVITED BY THE KING

The Banquet. Private Audience

I. *The Banquet.*

THE foregoing chapter will have established the fact that the Holy Eucharist is, without a doubt, the greatest blessing the world enjoys. And as was stated before, it is pre-eminently destined to be a food.

Men and women gather at banquets to be entertained and to parade their fineries. Only those with means can attend the banquets of the world. And their purpose is not so much the nourishing of the body as the launching of some pet scheme before the assembled guests, or the celebration of some event. But the Holy Eucharist is a banquet to which we are invited by the King. We are to partake of

this food solely to nourish the soul and become more intimately united with the King Himself. Well might this food be called the "Bread of Angels." It is more than that. It is the food that makes us like unto God. How gracious is the King who invites us! Not merely once in a great while may we come to the feast, but every day, and that upon His express wish and desire.

However, we must be properly garbed for the Banquet. It is not sufficient that the clothing of the body be properly arranged and as clean as circumstances will allow; but the soul must wear the garment which the poorest of us can afford, the magnificent vesture of Sanctifying Grace.

With regard to the preparation of the body, it is asked of us to refrain from eating and drinking from midnight before the day of receiving holy communion. It would naturally be expected that we appear at the Banquet suitably clothed. Not that the poor are barred—by no means. But even the poor may be

clean and tidy. Yes, even though we are in rags and covered with dirt, Our Saviour does not refuse to come to us as food for our souls. Indeed, I feel safe to say that the King would much rather enter the heart of the leper or the tramp than be compelled to take up His dwelling in those creatures of His who defile the temple of God by their immodest apparel. Can those girls and women be possessed of faith who approach the Holy Table insufficiently and immodestly clothed? Can they be welcome guests of the King who by their criminal exposure of their bodies entice the lustful looks of others and thus occasion sin? A hundred, yes a thousand times better that they would come in ragged and soiled clothing than that they appear in a garb that tends to frustrate the very purpose of holy communion, the sanctification of the soul. There is no excuse for the wickedness. It will not suffice to say: "We must follow the styles, and that is what the styles call for." They must not; and as Catholic girls and women they should not

follow a style that has been designed by the tools of the archenemy of society.

The proper preparation for the reception of this great sacrament further demands that the soul be clothed with grace. Hence the necessity of going to confession before holy communion if we should be in the state of mortal sin. After confession we should strive to keep our hearts unstained and even free from venial sin. However, venial sins that may have been committed should not restrain us from frequently approaching the Banquet Table.

It is understood that we prepare ourselves further by prayer, by acts of faith, hope, love, and desire. It must also be taken for granted that we approach this great sacrament with sincere reverence and devotion.

Sometimes we fail to experience the joy and happiness which rightfully should be ours after receiving holy communion. This may be due to a temporal indisposition of the body. But is it not possible that we do not receive the Blessed Sacrament with sufficient faith and de-

sire? We may not be able to experience the great longing of a St. Philip Neri or a St. Gertrude for the Holy Eucharist; but we can, at least, be rewarded with singular peace and happiness if we devoutly prepare for holy communion.

But even though the effects of our spiritual nourishment are not immediately apparent, God is working unmistakably in our souls. Have you not been amazed at the marvelous bravery and incredible courage of the little boys and maidens of early Christian times who fearlessly faced the torments that they were subjected to? What was it that gave them such superhuman courage? It was the Bread of Angels that had nourished their souls.

And, in a world full of vice and immorality, what is the secret reason that so many men and women inhabiting the monasteries and convents are able to preserve their hearts in virginal purity? It is undoubtedly the Food that daily nourishes their souls, that strengthens their wills, weakens their evil inclinations and

envelops their souls in such protecting grace that the powers of hell are helpless in their endeavor to smirch them.

Those of us who are careless about going to holy communion, who decline the insistent invitation of the King, do we realize that God has given us the best and the greatest gift in offering Himself in the Holy Eucharist? Do we understand and appreciate that here is a means that absolutely insures our eternal happiness? How, then, can we be cold and indifferent?

The world is in a sad state of confusion. Indeed, the time seems drawing near when the words of Our Saviour will be verified that even the just will be misled. Satan seems to have taken inventory of all his resources, and is even now launching a bold campaign of soul-destruction that threatens to spread ruin far and near. For Spiritism, the devil's own religion, has taken firm root in many countries, and even intelligent men and women are throwing incense on the altars of this mysterious

cult. We may be sure that the evil one has not yet exhausted his resources.

Therefore now more than ever Catholics must turn to the great source of true knowledge and the fountain of strength, the Holy Eucharist. Pope Pius X, considered by many a saint, had wonderful foresight—or was it the guidance of the Holy Ghost—when he promulgated the exhortation to frequent and even daily communion. No enemy and no fiend of hell can thwart the plans of God; but they can do much to destroy human souls. God gives us the remedy, the spiritual nourishment. If we refuse to accept it, if we decline the invitation, the guilt is ours entirely.

II. *The Private Audience*

Some years ago the writer had the great happiness of being admitted to an audience with the saintly Pope Pius X. I had made a long journey at great expense in order to experience that thrill of joy that passes over one when the Father of Christendom reaches

forth his hand and grasps your own. The audience was limited to a short period of time, during which none of those admitted ventured to breathe a word. Instead we knelt down before the august pontiff and bowed our heads to receive his blessing. The Holy Father spoke to us kindly and blessed our parents and relatives. We had attended his Mass and had received holy communion from his hands. Also we had the rare privilege of breakfasting at the Vatican. Altogether it was a day that will never be forgotten, a day of happiness and joy.

But One greater than the Pope is willing, nay, anxious, to grant every human being audience; not only once in a lifetime, but any one of us may have a private audience at any time we wish. It is our high privilege of visiting Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. Indeed, if He would manifest Himself in all His glory, not one of us would venture to approach the sanctuary. And even if, by any means, we could be induced to draw near, speech would

fail us, fear and trembling would overmaster us. The thought of the least of our sins would plunge us into abject misery. But how wonderfully the King has provided against these contingencies! Under the humble species of bread He hides His majesty in order that we might come with confidence and lay our wants before Him.

Therefore on our way to work, or whenever passing a Catholic church let us enter, if only for a moment, yes, if only to genuflect before the tabernacle. The King will recognize the thoughtfulness of His subject and will reward it. You say that you have no time. Perhaps the nature of your errand precludes the opportunity of tarrying long; but surely a moment is yours. Do you know that if we really want to do anything we find time?

Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist has been called the "Prisoner of Love." What? The King a prisoner! Indeed He is; but His imprisonment is of His own choice. It is love for us that keeps Him in the tabernacle.

We will never understand the love of God for us. Perhaps if we could detach ourselves from the material things that hold our interest and claim our time, if we could but lift our vision above and beyond this life, we could estimate, in some manner, the wonderful love of God.

But even in the midst of a sinful and material world we could see that love if we tried. The surest means of attaining a loftier and nobler vision is to betake ourselves frequently to the hallowed vicinity of the tabernacle. There the angels of God waft the sweet fragrance of sanctity about the Lord's little prison. And from it the all-consuming fire of love bursts forth. We cannot but be purified by this fire. And going forth from the King's throne-room we know that we have been sanctified; we feel secure on our way; for it is as though the angels from the vicinity of the tabernacle were accompanying us.

The great need of our times is not more knowledge and erudition, but greater intimacy

with the King whose subjects we are. The sweet union with our God in holy communion can be approached in sublimity only by the high privilege of visiting Him and personally conversing with Him.

CHAPTER VI

A GREAT SACRAMENT

Matrimony a Sacrament. Nuptial Mass.
Courtship. Divorce

THERE is, perhaps, no sacrament so important to the welfare of the human race, to the prosperity of nations and the happiness of individuals, as the sacrament of Matrimony. Not to speak of its undoubted influence in shaping the weal or woe of nations, its importance for the individual's spiritual welfare cannot be estimated.

As a priest the writer has seen careless young men and frivolous girls grow serious in the pursuit of their soul's salvation after having been united in the holy bonds of Matrimony with a God-fearing woman or well-bred young man. But alas, he has also seen innocent

maidens and promising young men sacrifice their virtue and their common sense when united in marriage with a man or woman of worldly motives and un-Christian principles. As a contract Matrimony binds and binds forever. Therefore, the greatest caution and prudence must be employed by those contemplating this important step. But it is rather as a sacrament that we view Matrimony here.

There were no sacraments when God first created man and woman and joined them together in the intimate relationship of wedlock. There was no need of means of grace, for man proceeded from the hand of the Creator undefiled and not subject to concupiscence. However, he boldly and brazenly rebelled against God and fell from his high estate. Henceforth he was a creature tormented by passion and subject to internal and external temptations.

He had to endure a long period of expectation until the promised Redeemer came. The Saviour appeared and redeemed the world.

No one could partake of the fruits of Redemption, however, except by drawing from those channels which the Saviour provided. Chief among these are the sacraments. And when He so lovingly provided for our every need, He did not neglect to give men and women united in holy wedlock the bountiful fruits of His merits. He raised Matrimony to the dignity of a sacrament.

We often speak of people being married by a priest. This is not quite correct. The priest is merely a witness at a marriage ceremony. The contracting parties actually administer the sacrament to each other, by respectively declaring their consent to accept the other as husband or wife. The priest, however, is a necessary witness, for the Church demands that marriages of Catholics take place before a priest and two witnesses.

The Nuptial Mass is not necessarily a part of the marriage ceremony. In fact, when bride and the groom leave the altar, just before the priest begins the Mass, they are al-

ready joined in the holy union of Matrimony.

Genuine Catholics, however, are not satisfied with the brief ceremony of the sacrament; they desire the added blessing of the Great Sacrifice which is offered up for their intention. Accordingly many priests refuse to perform the marriage ceremony for Catholics except they consent to have the Nuptial Mass. Of course, in mixed marriages there is not a Nuptial Mass. Neither may such marriages take place in church.

There is a very particular reason for insisting upon the Nuptial Mass in marriages where both parties are Catholics; namely, to obtain the bridal blessing. And, indeed, who stands in greater need of God's blessing than the woman destined by the Almighty to be His instrument in carrying on the great work of creation? And is it not a token of her sincere Catholicity that she who stands on the threshold of a new life, who may be the means of rearing saints as well as the occasion of lost immortal souls, humbly prostrates herself be-

fore the Father in heaven to receive His blessing?

The utter frivolity with which many, in our times, rush into the sacred alliance of marriage is evidence sufficient that this state is generally not considered as something sacred. Needless to say, the blessing of God is not sought. And consequently the words of the poet are verified:

“Thus grief still treads upon the heels of
pleasure;
Married in haste, we may repent at leisure.”

Time and experience have demonstrated that married life is not all sunshine and roses. There may be roses, but the stems from which they are plucked are thick with thorns. Too many forget that we have no permanent dwelling on earth. They expect that human love can satiate the yearning of the heart for happiness; and they look to marriage as the source of complete joy. But when the dark clouds of disappointment lower above them, and storms

of disagreement mar the fair horizon of their future, they are apt to forget the vows of eternal fidelity pledged before the altar. It is then that the blessing of God and sacramental grace is needed.

Therefore, good Catholics, who enter the sacred state of wedlock, are solicitous to obtain the full blessing of God by a worthy reception of the sacrament, and by receiving the precious benediction of the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

Matrimony being of such great importance to national welfare and to the well-being of the individual, it is apparent that the preparation for marriage should be a matter of more than ordinary care. Courtship is generally recognized as a period of time allotted to a man and woman for the purpose of learning to know each other with a view to marriage. It is not a time merely for frivolities. Nor is it a period of license and utter disregard of the proprieties of social intercourse. Here let us emphatically register our condemnation of long courtships. They are not necessary; and

in very many instances are conducive to immoral living. You cannot trifle with human nature. Love may be pure and noble; but it may also degenerate into a ruining passion.

We do not suppose for a moment that a decent girl will give up her most precious treasure, her virtue, without a struggle or protest. But small irregularities lead to great crimes. Liberties are allowed which soon take upon themselves the aspects of criminal actions. If ever the saying that "love is blind" were true, it is substantiated only too frequently by the shame and remorse that blights the lives of innocent girls who give up their virtue in the name of love. And do we not understand that every man must think less of the woman who falls, even though he be the cause of her dereliction? To his better self she was the noblest being in creation; with the eyes of love he saw in her a beauty and charm which, perhaps, was not apparent to others. Had she maintained her sublime position in spite of temptation, her loveliness would have been enhanced.

But her fall puts her down to the level of ordinary human beings.

A girl owes it to herself to preserve her heart undefiled during the time of courtship. If any man refuses to respect her firm determination to preserve her purity, that man is not fit to be her husband, and will probably prove to be a cruel, passionate beast. The young man must show that he is worthy of a good girl by at all times proving to be the protector of her virtue, not its assailant.

An equally important reason for sinless courtships is the fact that the period before marriage is a direct preparation for the life that is to follow. Happy young couples may have visions of a life that will differ materially from the lives of all others. However, they are destined to be disillusioned. Married life is not all pleasure. It may be full of happiness, nevertheless, if man and wife live holy lives and enjoy the blessing of God. But can they expect God to bless a union that has been preceded by crime and daring disregard of the

commandments? It may be taken as an axiom that God blesses those who seek His blessing and strive to merit it. But vice versa, those who call down upon themselves the wrath of God by trampling upon His laws should not be surprised if God's punishment is visited upon them.

But there is another danger, and it is not an imaginary one. When the day set for the marriage arrives, those who are to receive the sacrament are expected to go to confession and holy communion. If the past weeks and months have been spent in sinful liberties, the danger is very great that shame and fear will suggest a bad confession, in which these sins are omitted. Oh, what a preparation for the holy state of Matrimony! To begin with a sacrilege a life that must have the blessing of God! What a sad wedding day it must be for bride and groom if their conscience tells them that they have committed a hideous crime by compelling their God to enter hearts that are foul with sin and sacrilege! And the years

that are to come, years of trials and hardships—will God bless them?

Need we further proof that courtships should be short, and that the principals should exercise the greatest caution so as to avoid sin and merit the blessing of God? Happy the bride and groom who can enter the marriage state with a clean heart. They too will have trials and disappointments—but the grace of God will always strengthen and refresh them.

It will be apparent that marriage, this holy union which God Himself ordained, should be inviolate, and that divorce is un-Christian, immoral, and intolerable. And yet the greatest scandal in our country is the frequency and facility with which divorce is granted. The Church does not recognize divorce. "What God has joined, let no man put asunder." Liberals and atheists may fret and fume, but she will never change her stand. She told Henry VIII that divorce was a crime, even though it cost her a kingdom. She clings to her interpretation of the law of God and will

ever cling to it. And unless our country awakes to the danger that threatens to undermine her stability, divorce, the greatest enemy of the human family and of national welfare, will ultimately destroy the very pillars of government. For the nation depends upon the family. If the purity and integrity of the family are maintained, we may with confidence look forward to a great and mighty nation. But if the family is disrupted, if its purity is defiled, the nation will rapidly go to its grave, just as the nations of the past have sped on to ruin and oblivion.

What a boon for the human race that God has raised Matrimony to the dignity of a sacrament! May He speed the day when the peoples of all nations will look upon this holy union as one ordained by God and blessed with sacramental grace.

CHAPTER VII

CARE OF THE SICK

When to Call the Priest. In the Sick Room.
Extreme Unction. Latent Life
After Sudden Death.

IT is an axiom that “the sacraments are for human beings.” This being true, we will observe how lovingly God has provided for that momentous day when death approaches with the inevitable summons. Death is the most important event in the life of man; for upon the nobility or depravity of the soul in that hour depends an eternity of happiness or damnation.

It will be apparent that we may not trifle with Death, nor may we prescribe to him the methods of his procedure. At times he is merciless and with one sudden blow strikes down

his victim. Then again he assumes the rôle of friend and tarries before announcing his message. Again he paralyzes the functioning of will and intellect long before his icy hand is laid on the frame.

One thing is certain, at the first hint of the approach of death the one who is to be called should have the full benefit of the sacraments and the blessing of the priest. This at once presents the question: When should we call the priest for the sick? There are times when there are no indications of immediate danger of death. But past experience has taught us that it is wise to prepare for possible contingencies. Thus, for example, many will undergo minor operations, such as are usually successful, as for appendicitis, without receiving the sacraments. Ninety-nine may live many years after a minor operation, but the hundredth one may die on the table. Would it not be lamentable if the unfortunate one were unprepared for death?

It is self-evident that when an operation

upon any of the vital organs is undertaken, the patient should be prepared by going to confession and communion. It may be noted here that it is preferable to have the priest administer the sacraments in the home rather than in the hospital. For in the home greater privacy is assured, and the Blessed Sacrament is less exposed to irreverence. However, this is not always possible; and the priest will gladly go to the hospital when called.

But the great majority of Catholics die in their homes. Many are confined to their beds for weeks and months before the final summons comes. From a spiritual standpoint, this period of sickness preceding death is very valuable. The sufferer can store up riches for himself, can atone for many sins of his life, and can make his suffering the means of shortening purgatory in the next life. He must, of course, have the proper intention, and he must be in the state of sanctifying grace, in order that his prayers and sufferings may be meritorious. Hence the advisability of having the

priest come when it becomes apparent that the patient will have to endure long suffering.

That we should never put off sending for the priest until the death agony sets in will be obvious if we but realize that it is very difficult for the sick person to pray in the last hours. There is a terrible struggle going on. Body and soul united so long, must be separated, and this separation causes pain and distress. You will observe that the dying sometimes ask others to pray for them. If it is difficult for them to pray, it will surely be burdensome to make a good confession and receive holy communion devoutly.

Now when it becomes advisable to send for the priest, he should if possible be notified during the day. If a call at night is urgent, and if the patient lives at a great distance from the church, a conveyance should be provided for the priest; or, at least, he should be accompanied by a boy or a man if he walks to the home.

The arrival of the priest at the home of the

sick is the signal for reverence and respect. For he brings the Saviour into your house. It is a pious custom to meet the priest at the door, holding a burning candle. The light is the acknowledgment of the Real Presence.

In the sick-room a table will have been provided for the convenience of the priest. It should be covered with a white cloth. A crucifix, two blessed candles, holy water, a glass of ordinary water, a spoon, a little salt, and some cotton complete the preparation of the table for the sick visit. Decency and reverence would demand that these articles be clean. They need not be of the very best of materials. The writer has attended the sick on occasions when he was obliged to lay the pyxis with the Sacred Host on the window-sill. But such conditions are rarely met with in the homes of practical Catholics.

The priest, after blessing the sick-room, will probably hear the patient's confession if time permits, and if the latter is able and disposed. He will, therefore, ask the attendants to leave

the room for a few minutes. The period of time when the priest sits by the bed of the sick to receive his or her confession is most valuable. It may be the patient's last confession. Oh, that it might be the best confession of his life! Does it not seem quite proper, therefore, that the attendants in the adjoining room, instead of indulging in gossip and loud laughter, should kneel down and pray? Priests can bear testimony that great miracles of grace have been wrought by prayer for the sick and dying.

When the confession has been made, the attendants and visitors are free to enter the sick-room. Needless to say, the sacred rites that follow—namely, the administration of the Holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction—are so rich in spiritual value to the sufferer that the conduct of those present should inspire devotion and piety in the sick person.

However, let us not so briefly dismiss the wonderful sacrament of Extreme Unction. To those who are conscious, this sacrament devoutly received is a source of untold strength

and consolation in that dark hour when body and soul are struggling in the agony of separation. I have seen men and women who feared death with an indescribable fear, and who spoke of death with body atremble and eyes dilated with horror. But when they had been anointed with the Holy Oils, the peace of God stole over them. Not seldom this sacrament actually restores health or prepares the way for convalescence. Every priest will bear testimony to the wonderful workings of Extreme Unction in restoring the sick to health and in strengthening and consoling the dying.

But we have not yet seen the limit of God's mercy to man. Not only when man is able to make a good confession is the Lord willing to forgive him his sins, but even when he stands on the threshold of eternity the mercy and love of God go out to him. Thus, if a baptized person, at any time in his life, had either implicitly or explicitly made the intention of receiving Extreme Unction before death, and if death suddenly struck him down giving him

only a moment for imperfect sorrow for his sins, the sacrament of Extreme Unction administered before life was extinct would save his soul.

This being true, we cannot emphasize too strongly the desirability of calling the priest to the aid of one who suddenly has died or has met with a fatal accident. For, even though all indications point to death, even though the doctor has declared that death was instantaneous, life may linger for many minutes, yes, for hours. This is particularly true in cases of sudden deaths, drowning, electrocution, and the like. This is not a new theory. The facts have been substantiated, and science has unmistakable proofs for the belief in latent life after apparent death. Personally, I have anointed a number of persons thirty minutes after apparent death from heart-failure. In one case I baptized a man who had signified his intention of becoming a Catholic, but was prevented from carrying out his resolve by sudden death. It may be that my ministrations were too late

in all cases. However, it is equally possible and even probable that in every case life was not yet extinct. If the one stricken had but momentary contrition, and that imperfect, he could not be saved if he had been in the state of mortal sin. But his contrition together with Extreme Unction would save his soul.

Such is the wonderful grace of the Holy Anointing. We should all have the intention of receiving this sacrament before our death. We should also do everything in our power to enable others to receive it. For we have the words of Holy Scripture to guarantee its worth and value: "Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man; and the Lord shall raise him up; and, if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him." (*James* v. 14-15.)

CHAPTER VIII

THE BRIDGE-BUILDERS

Preparation for the Priesthood. Minor and Major Orders

BEFORE Redemption a vast chasm yawned between heaven and earth. It was impossible for man to enter the heaven for which he was made. But when the Saviour reëstablished friendly relations between God and the world, when He, in the name of man, atoned for the sins of humanity, He instituted the sacraments as the sacred means whereby human beings could bridge the chasm and attain to God and happiness. However, it was His will that a separate class of human beings should be ordained as ministers of these sacraments. They are the priests, the bridge-builders.

To the average non-Catholic the name *priest*

means nothing; and he will persist in calling our priests preachers. But to the instructed Catholic the priesthood is a glorious heritage, a gift of God, a boon to the human race.

It is not our purpose to bring forward the indisputable proofs upon which the Catholic Church builds her claims to the authenticity of her priesthood. Suffice it to say that no truth in history is more firmly established than the fact that Our Lord instituted a sacrifice and commanded His apostles to continue it; and that the earliest symbols and engravings in the catacombs at Rome give undeniable evidence of the priestly character of the first ministers of the Church.

In this chapter our aim will be to make our kind readers more familiar with that wonderful sacrament, Holy Orders, and with the stages of preparation that lead the candidate for the priesthood to its sublime grace and power.

The priest is, indeed, the bridge-builder; for he, in the name of Jesus Christ, daily offers the

exalted sacrifice that binds together heaven and earth. But the priest is not selected at random from among the laity. After God Himself has chosen His minister, the Church is careful to lead him step by step through the various stages of preparation and ordination until she invests him with the stole and chasuble and charges him to offer up the Great Sacrifice as a priest of God.

As a lad of fourteen or fifteen years the chosen one enters college for his preliminary training. The first six years are spent in the study of those languages, arts, and sciences which not only equip him for the university or seminary, but also primarily tend to develop his character and broaden his vision. All the faculties of his soul, his memory, understanding, and will power, are carefully unfolded so that he may be fully qualified to assume the burdens of the lofty station in life to which he has been called.

The work of developing character is further augmented in the study of philosophy. With

trained memory, sharpened intellect, and cultured strength of will, he is in a position to reason properly and arrive at logical conclusions. His course of philosophy completed, and equipped with the methods and manner of correct reasoning, he is admitted to the noblest of all studies, theology, the science of God.

The last years of his preparation for the priesthood draw the candidate nearer and nearer to God. If he has a true vocation, the hard work and study of these years will be fully compensated for by the joy and happiness that he discovers in knowing God better.

He is now gradually approaching the time when the Church takes a direct hand in his affairs and segregates him from the laity. This first step to Holy Orders is called *tonsure*.

The tonsure is a solemn ceremony of the Church by which a baptized person is publicly selected from the laity and destined for the service of God. It is not an ordination; for the cleric has no powers or jurisdiction in the Church.

The bishop usually administers the tonsure during Mass, immediately after the *Introit* (Entrance). This circumstance is very significant. The young aspirant is about to enter upon a life of sacrifice. If he expects anything else, the priesthood is not his vocation. He approaches the bishop, wearing a black cassock, carrying a surplice over his left arm, and holding a burning candle in his right hand. His change of dress indicates that he is about to renounce the world to accept Christ as his legacy.

Kneeling in a semicircle the candidates surround the bishop, who sits on the faldstool and wears the insignia of his office. Every candidate is called by name, to which he responds. The ceremony that follows is noteworthy. The bishop cuts the hair of the candidate's head in the form of a cross; i.e., in front, in back, and then on both sides. He also cuts off some of the hair at the crown of the head. Whilst this rite is being performed the aspirant recites the fifth verse of the fifteenth Psalm:

“The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup: it is Thou that wilt restore my inheritance to me.”

The cutting of the hair signifies that the cleric despises the vanity of the world, but also that he accepts the crown of the Saviour, the crown of thorns.

After the candidate has received the tonsure, the bishop takes the surplice from his left arm and invests him with it, saying: “May God clothe thee with a new man, who is created according to God in justice and the holiness of truth.”

After the tonsure has been conferred, there are seven sacred rites before the aspirant is fully ordained as a priest. The first four of these offices, *doorkeeper*, *reader*, *exorcist*, and *acolyte*, are called minor orders. They are not sacraments or parts of sacraments, but sacramentals. *Subdeaconship*, *deaconship*, and *priesthood* are called major orders. Holy Orders is only one sacrament, but it has three degrees, the first of which is the diaconate,

the second is that of the priesthood, and the third or highest is the dignity of bishop.

Of the minor orders, that of doorkeeper is a sacred rite by which the cleric receives the authority to care for the sanctity of the house of God and the proper discipline in carrying out the services prescribed by the Church. The reader is given the authority and the office of reading the Sacred Scriptures to the faithful and of instructing catechumens and children in the rudiments of faith.

The third of the minor orders confers a power upon the cleric which he may not use until he has attained to the priesthood. It is the authority to exorcise; i.e., expel evil spirits from things and persons. The reason for the restriction of this power will be apparent, for those in minor orders are not yet irrevocably bound to the clerical state.

The office of acolyte confers upon the candidate the right to care for the lights of the church and prepare the wine and water for the eucharistic sacrifice.

The minor orders serve to emphasize the tremendous dignity of the priesthood, and in this manner lead the aspirant step by step to the consummation of his holy resolve, granting him abundant time for inquiry into the sincerity of his vocation.

We now come to the major orders, and it will be our endeavor to explain them at length, unfolding the full beauty and significance of these rites.

Subdeaconship, although placed by the Council of Trent among the major orders, is not a sacrament, but a sacramental instituted by the Church. However, this is a most sacred ordination and is, in reality, the most important step taken by the cleric in his climb to the lofty heights of Holy Orders. For here he breaks forever with the world by taking upon himself the obligation of celibacy and the duty of daily reciting the holy office of the breviary. Even though he should discover his unworthiness or lack of vocation, once he has received subdeaconship he remains in the

clerical state forever, and is bound to its obligations. Therefore the bishop, at this solemn moment, calls upon all the candidates to weigh well the consequences of the step that they are about to take, so that if there should be one present who is not called by God, he may still turn back.

The candidates approach the bishop, wearing the humeral over their shoulders, the long white alb and the cincture. After the preliminary prayers and admonitions, the bishop kneels down, whilst the candidates prostrate themselves completely on the floor. The solemn Litany of the Saints is then intoned. Toward the end of the litany, the bishop rises and begs God to bless, sanctify, and consecrate the aspirants. He kneels down again until the litany is finished. At the end all rise; the bishop takes his seat and the candidates kneel before him.

The formula of the ordination consists in the following: The bishop hands an empty chalice and patena to each candidate, which

the latter touches with his right hand. Then the archdeacon holds before them the cruets with wine and water and the tray, which similarly are touched. In observing these ceremonies, the bishop pronounces the words which confer upon the candidate the right to assist at the altar in the sacrifice of the Mass. Next he places the subdeacon's humeral over his head; and the maniple is put on his left arm. The maniple is a symbol of hard work and sacrifice in the service of the Lord. These ceremonies conclude the first of the major orders.

If there are men in the priesthood who are unhappy because of lack of vocation, it can be nobody's fault but their own. For the Church is most zealous in striving to accept only those who are called by God. Thus before major orders she prescribes that all candidates make a spiritual retreat in order that the fear of God may deter them from seeking Holy Orders out of any other than spiritual motives.

The young cleric who has been ordained a subdeacon, if he is sincere in his vocation, im-

patiently awaits the day when he is to receive the first degree of the sacrament of the priesthood; namely, deaconship. "The ordination of deacons is not only a sacred ordination in the restricted sense of the word like the ordination of subdeacons, but like the ordination of priests and the consecration of bishops, is a sacramental rite, a true and real sacrament of the New Testament instituted by Jesus Christ." ¹

The ordination of deacons is, therefore, a sacramental rite whereby the candidate is authorized to assist bishops and priests in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, to read the Gospel, and, if permission is granted by the bishop, to baptize, preach, and give holy communion to the faithful.

Let us now accompany the candidates as, with hearts filled with joy and souls purified in grace, they draw near to the altar to receive this sacrament.

After the bishop has finished reading the

¹ Lohmann, *Der Priesterstand*, p. 274.

Epistle of the Mass, the archdeacon calls to all the candidates to approach. They come forward clothed with the humeral, alb, cincture, and maniple, holding a burning candle in the right hand, while on the left arm they carry the stole and dalmatic. Again they kneel before the bishop in a semicircle. The archdeacon, in the name of the Church, begs the bishop to elevate the subdeacons to the dignity of the diaconate. But the bishop, mindful of the responsibility that rests upon him, puts the question: "Do you know them to be worthy?" And the archdeacon responds: "As far as human frailty can tell, I know and testify that they are worthy of the burdens of this office." A long preparation has preceded this all-important step of the candidates; testimonials of character are required from every institution in which the candidates have studied, as well as from every bishop in whose diocese they have sojourned for six months. Accordingly the archdeacon speaks in the name of all those who have carefully guided the candidates in their

preparation. Even at this solemn moment the Church would hold back those who are not called by God. For the bishop calls upon any one present who objects to the ordination of any of the candidates to make known his objection.

If the silence that follows gives testimony of the worthiness of the candidates, the bishop proceeds to charge the young subdeacons with the importance of the office they are about to assume. In unmistakable terms he emphasizes the duty of pure and chaste lives, if they would take part and be ministers of the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

Thereupon the aspirants prostrate themselves while the solemn Litany of the Saints is recited. And again, as in the ordination of subdeacons, the bishop implores God to bless, sanctify and consecrate the prospective deacons.

After several beautiful prayers for the blessing of God upon the candidates, the most inspiring act of the sacred rite takes place. The

bishop lays his hands upon the head of each candidate, thus performing the essential ceremony of ordination. The bishop, standing erect and with hands elevated, intones the magnificent Preface, in which he thanks God joyfully for the increase in the number of His servants. He breaks off the Preface, and lays his hands upon every candidate, saying: "Receive the Holy Ghost for thy strength, and to resist the devil and his temptations. In the name of the Lord." He then extends his hand over the newly-ordained deacons and begs God to send them the Holy Ghost with His seven gifts. The beautiful Preface is finished. The deacons are now invested in the garb of their office. The bishop lays the stole over the candidate's left shoulder, saying: "Receive the chaste stole from the hand of God: fulfil thy ministry: for God is powerful and can give thee His grace: Who lives and reigns for ages and ages. Amen." He then clothes the deacon with the dalmatic, saying: "May the Lord invest thee with the garb of

salvation and the vestment of joy, and may the dalmatic (the emblem) of justice always surround thee. In the name of the Lord. Amen." Finally the bishop holds forth the Gospel, which the deacon touches with his right hand, while the bishop says: "Receive the power to read the Gospel in the Church of God for the living and for the dead. In the name of the Lord. Amen."

Prayers for the newly-ordained deacons complete the sacred rite of the first degree of the great sacrament.

And now, dear reader, we have come to the solemn hour for which the cleric has prayed and labored for so many years. Can you begin to realize with what burning desire he enters the sanctuary to be anointed as a priest of God? Can you experience only a part of the joy that sends his pure young blood rushing through his veins? Twelve long years have passed, years of trials, of temptations and of hard work, and now the coveted goal has been reached; he stands before the bishop to

receive the greatest power that can be bestowed upon a human being.

We have seen the beautiful garland of ceremonies woven by the Church around the first degree of the priesthood; we shall behold an even greater display of ceremonial grandeur unfolded in the second degree, the priesthood itself.

Those to be ordained appear before the bishop in the vestments of deacons, carrying on their left arm a folded chasuble, and in the right hand a burning candle. As in the ordination of deacons, the worthiness of the candidates is investigated.

The bishop then addresses those who are to receive the sacrament. He calls upon them to realize the importance of the authority that they are about to receive; and to persevere in wisdom, good morals, and justice. Thereupon all aspirants prostrate themselves while the litany is recited. The blessing of the bishop, toward the end of the litany, is carried out as in the other major orders.

Now the important moment has arrived. Whilst the angels of heaven look on in reverential awe, the sacred rite of ordination begins. Without speaking a word the bishop lays both hands upon the head of each candidate. All priests who are present follow his example. What an inspiring spectacle! No word, no hymn, no sweet tone of the organ breaks the solemn stillness; but through the very stillness the hearts of the bishop, priests, and candidates are crying aloud to God to send the Holy Ghost upon the young men in consecration.

Then the bishop and priests extend their right hand over the aspirants, while the bishop prays that God may shower His heavenly gifts upon those whom He has elected to the priesthood. Various orations for the young priests are said, culminating in the beautiful and soul-thrilling Preface.

The bishop, seated on the faldstool and wearing his miter,¹ lays the stole upon the breast of

¹ The wearing of the miter is an indication of episcopal authority.

each candidate in the form of a cross, saying, "Accept the yoke of the Lord; for His yoke is sweet, and His burden light." He then invests all with the chasuble, the back of which is rolled together, saying, "Receive the sacerdotal vestment, by which love is understood; for God is powerful to give thee love and a perfect work." The bishop then rises and prays that the priests of the Church may attain to perfect manhood and Christian perfection, which is dependent upon regular spiritual exercises and daily meditation.

According to theologians, the young men have, by the imposition of hands and the accompanying prayers of the bishop, received the Holy Ghost and the full character and power of the priesthood. But even as the rose reveals its full splendor and releases its delightful fragrance by unfolding its tender petals, so also, the following inspiring ceremonies unfold the real grandeur and sublimity of the Catholic priesthood.

The priest receives the authority to bless, to

sacrifice and to forgive sins. Accordingly, the sacred rites of ordination are divided into three parts.

The bishop intones the *Veni Creator*, which is continued by the choir, whilst he, sitting on the faldstool and wearing his miter, consecrates the hands of each new priest. Having dipped his thumb in holy oil, he draws a line on the hands of the candidate, from the thumb of the right hand to the index-finger of the left hand, and from the thumb of the left hand to the index-finger of the right. He then anoints the palms of both hands. The anointing is accompanied by the words conferring the power to bless and consecrate. The bishop then lays the hands of each candidate together to be bound with a linen cloth by one of the assistants.

How becoming that the hands of the priest are blessed and consecrated, those hands which daily hold the sacred body of Our Lord, the hands raised so often in blessing and in administering the sacraments! No wonder that

in Catholic countries the faithful, upon meeting a priest, grasp and kiss his hand.

The bishop now expressly confers upon the newly-ordained priests the most exalted power of their office; namely, that of offering the unbloody sacrifice of the Mass. The Ordinary holds a chalice with wine and a patena with an unconsecrated host before each candidate, which the latter touches while the bishop says: "Receive the power to offer sacrifice to God and to celebrate Masses for the living and the dead. In the name of the Lord. Amen." So great and so far-reaching in its importance before God is the power of the priest, that we can readily imagine that the angels in heaven intone a joyous *Te Deum* and fill the celestial realms with their songs of praise, when again the sublime power is conferred upon a human being.

After the preceding ceremony the linen cloths are taken from the hands of the young priests, the oil is wiped from their hands, and they immediately proceed to exercise the sacer-

dotal power which they possess. For, together with the bishop, they offer up the sacrifice of the Mass. The Ordinary says all the prayers in a loud voice, whilst the new priests say them with him. And thus they are, in reality, offering up their first holy Mass.

After the Offertory, the young men approach the bishop, who sits on the faldstool before the altar, offer him a burning candle, and kiss his ring. They thereby consecrate themselves to the service of the Church, and acknowledge their subordination to the bishop's authority. Just before communion, the bishop bestows the kiss of peace upon one of the newly-ordained, and he in turn gives it to the others.

After the kiss of peace the bishop administers holy communion to all the ordained. What sacred emotions fill their hearts and animate their souls as they receive the sacred body of Our Lord, which they for the first time, together with the bishop, have called into sacramental existence!

After Mass the bishop, who is a teacher and guardian of faith, stands before the altar wearing his miter and holding his shepherd's staff, whilst the newly-ordained recite the Apostles' Creed.

Then singly they kneel before the bishop, who lays both hands on the head of every one, saying: "Receive the Holy Ghost, whose sins you shall forgive, are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, are retained."

All the powers of the priesthood have now been conferred upon the candidates. Burning with the zeal of the Holy Ghost, they are now prepared to go forth and labor unceasingly for the greater glory of God. However, if their efforts should be fruitful and pleasing to God, they must follow the direction of their bishop. Consequently, we see the bishop taking the hands of each newly-ordained priest in his own, while he puts the question: "Do you promise me and my successors reverence and obedience?" The priest answers: "I

promise.” The bishop then gives him the kiss of peace.

The ceremonies that follow consist in a succession of prayers for the ordained and counsels and warnings to live according to their holy state.

After the bishop has imposed upon all the duty of saying three Masses, the Last Gospel is read.

The inspiring and sublime rite is ended. The newly-ordained priests possess power and authority far above that of the angels. We readily understand why good Catholics have such reverence for their priests. For they see in them, not merely men of learning or wisdom; but with the eyes of faith, they see that indelible mark which God Himself has impressed upon the priest's soul, the sign that he has been raised above his fellow-men to a dignity and authority which only the angels can fully estimate.

CHAPTER IX

THE SACRAMENTALS

Their Nature. Some Forms

IT is a mark of profound ignorance when non-Catholics accuse us of superstitious practices because we carry the Rosary in our pocket, or because we cherish our scapular or medal. True, if we attributed any healing power or charm to the substance of the medal or the cloth of the scapular, we would, indeed, be guilty of superstition. But Catholics do not use holy water or burn candles because they believe that these articles, in themselves, have any protecting power. Their confidence and trust arises from the fact that these sacramentals are blessed in the name of the Church of God, who received from the Almighty the power of blessing.

What, then, are sacramentals? The name seems to indicate that they are somewhat similar to the sacraments. However, there is a vast difference between the two. The sacraments are instituted by Our Lord Himself. They either give or increase sanctifying grace. Now the sacramentals are purely of ecclesiastical origin, and their purpose is to render us more worthy of the sacraments. Also they may be intended as safeguards for body and soul against sickness and sin.

The blessing given by a priest is a sacramental, likewise the consecration of a Pope, of an emperor or king, or the consecration of nuns in holy religion. Churches are also consecrated and blessed. In these instances, the words of blessing are to be taken as the sacramental. But the name also applies to articles that are blessed; e.g., holy water, rosaries, medals, candles, etc.

In the blessing of holy water, the priest begs God to purify and sanctify the water in order that the faithful may by the use of it be

defended from the evil spirits, and safeguarded in health; and that the homes in which it shall be used will be free from impurities and defended from all harm.

In the blessing of women after childbirth, the priest, after reciting a psalm of thanksgiving, places his stole in the hand of the woman with the words: "Enter thou into the temple of God, adore the Son of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Who giveth thee fruitfulness of offspring." This induction into the church is followed by several versicles imploring God to protect the woman, and in conclusion the priest recites the following prayer: "Almighty, everlasting God, who, through the delivery of the Blessed Virgin Mary, hast turned the pains of the faithful at childbirth into joy: look mercifully on this Thy handmaid, who cometh in gladness to Thy holy temple to offer up her thanks: and grant that after this life, through the merits and intercession of the same Blessed Mary, she may prove worthy to obtain, together with her child, the joys of everlasting

happiness. Through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen.”

In blessing the scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, the following oration is used: “Lord Jesus Christ, Saviour of the human race, sanctify with Thy right hand this garment which, out of love for Thee and for Thy Mother, the Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel, Thy servant will devoutly wear, so that by the intercession of the same Mother, he may be defended from the malignant spirit and may persevere in Thy grace until death: Who livest and reignest for ages and ages. Amen.”

Have you observed that in the blessing of the sacramentals there is no mention made of any inherent power in the materials used, but that all benediction is petitioned from God through the merits or intercession of the saints? In granting us the use of the sacramentals, the Church does nothing more than share with us the riches that have been stored up in her treasury by Christ and the saints.

Now, then, where is there even a semblance of superstition in the use of the sacramentals? Superstition, correctly defined, consists in ascribing to creatures and circumstances powers which they do not possess by nature or by the blessing of the Church. Every sane person knows that ordinary water does not possess the power of warding off the evil spirits or of preventing or curing disease. But in becoming holy water it is enriched with the blessing of the Church of God. This blessing is the reason for the Catholic's belief in holy water.

Is it wrong for the Church to do what Christ Himself sanctioned? We see Him blessing the loaves and fishes before performing the great miracle of the multiplication of loaves. He blessed the apostles and laid His hands upon little children in benediction.

However, the sacramentals may be abused. They are not a cure-all, nor do they assume the character of a charm that is supposed to bring good luck. They have their full value

from the prayer of the Church. True, the prayers of the Church are always heard, but it does not follow that we will obtain whatever we desire through the prayers of God's Church. The devout use of the sacramentals will redound to our benefit in whatever manner pleases God.

Now some of the sacramentals used in our religious services may seem meaningless and useless. Some years ago the question was put to me: "Why does the Church persist in using burning candles in broad daylight? There is no sense to it. "Oh, but there is a world of sense and significance to the blessed candle. Christ is the Light of the World, and the burning candle symbolizes Christ. The paschal candle, which is blessed by the priest on Holy Saturday, is especially designated as the Light that illuminated the darkness in the world.

Even if we would assume that the candles on the altar serve no higher purpose than to shed light, we would be forced to admit that the purest material had been selected; namely,

the wax manufactured in the workshop of the honey-bee.

The burning candles in our churches or in our homes, sending their flames heavenward, also are symbolical of the prayers that ascend to God from our hearts. And thus the placing of a blessed candle on the altar actually becomes a prayer.

We hold the blessed candle at the most important times in our lives. At Baptism the sponsor holds it for us, and when the priest gives it to him his words are: "Receive this burning light and keep thy Baptism so as to be without blame: observe the commandments of God, that when Our Lord shall come to His nuptials, thou mayest meet Him together with all the saints of the heavenly court, and mayest have eternal life and live forever and ever. Amen." Note the allusion to the virgins who with burning lamps went to meet the bridegroom.

Again the Church places the blessed candle in our hands when we are about to depart

from this life. Many a one, when he found himself slowly being enveloped by the shadows of death, has called for more light. Was it the gradual loss of the sight of the eyes, or was it the darkness of death without Christ? The burning candle in the hand of the dying Catholic tells him that Christ, the Light of the World, will illuminate his path on the last journey and will lead him from the darkness of death to the dawn of eternal life.

Some have also taken offense at the practice of the Church in blessing the bodies of the dead. Surely those bodies that in life were temples of the Holy Ghost and the tabernacles wherein Our Saviour had so often abided, are worthy of being blessed when about to be consigned to the grave. But perhaps the practice of incensing the bodies of the dead gives rise to some misunderstanding. Incense is not only used in adoration, but also takes its place with holy water as a means of conferring the blessing of the Church upon any creature. Thus incense is used in the blessing of palms

and candles, in the consecration of a church, in the blessing of bells, and in many other blessings and consecrations.

It will now be apparent that if one uses the sacramentals according to the intention and direction of the Church, he cannot incur the slightest guilt of superstition. Nay more, the sacramentals are gifts of rare value, and not only help and sustain body and soul, but also are symbolical of beautiful thoughts and inspiring sentiments. The evil spirit knows the value of the prayer of the Church, and he fears her means of grace. It is to his advantage to discourage the use of the sacramentals, and, who knows, it may be for that reason that non-Catholics are so quick to accuse the Church and the faithful of superstition.

CHAPTER X

THE PERENNIAL BUGABOO

What an Indulgence is, and what it is not. Various Kinds

SOME time ago, while glancing over the church advertisements in one of our daily newspapers, the writer was amazed at what was called a series of interesting topics to be discussed in one of the city's non-Catholic churches. Among other sermon subjects of a like nature was the following: "Indulgences: How the Roman Catholic Pays for the Privilege of Sinning." We might expect such manifestations of utter ignorance from those who swallow all the filth that the "Menace" places before them but that an educated American who is supposed to be a leader and, *par excellence*, an exponent of honesty and

truthfulness, should betray either such ignorance or such malice, is really beyond all comprehension.

But, you say, this is not the first time that I have heard unfavorable comment on the Catholic doctrine of indulgences. And where there is so much smoke, surely there must be fire. The answer is that the Catholic Church has been made the victim of a most malicious campaign of slander, and that she is powerless to undo all the wrong that has been heaped upon her. You must know that the so-called Reformation was ushered in under circumstances that suppressed truth and favored falsehood. Wherever the "Reformers" could gain royal favor, laws were enacted that prohibited the exposition of Catholic doctrine in books. It was a crime to defend the Church in writing in England. The consequence was that everything that pertained to Catholic doctrine was studiously misrepresented in history and biography. Honest investigators to-day declare that the history of the past four hun-

dred years is grossly unjust to the Catholic Church, and that it purposely misrepresents the facts concerning this great religious body. And since the doctrine of indulgences was the pretext upon which Martin Luther launched his rebellion, it is but natural that this doctrine fared worst at the hands of those whose purpose it was to ruin the Church.

Never in the history of the Roman Catholic Church has it been believed, or has the belief been tolerated, that an indulgence grants the right to sin. Any one but faintly conscious of the Church's unceasing battle against sin in every form would refuse to be led into such an absurd error.

What, then, is an indulgence? First of all, let us see what it is not. It is not a permission to sin. It is not a remission of sin. It in no way encourages sin, for one must be free from sin to gain an indulgence.

Let us suppose that Jimmy, a lad of our acquaintance, has deliberately broken his little sister's doll. The act is unjustifiable and

causes the little maid great grief. Jimmy's better self realizes the wretched meanness of his act, and he begs the girl for forgiveness, which after many promises and much coaxing is finally granted. However, the mother has witnessed the whole performance. She is pleased that Jimmy is sorry for his unkindness, but at the same time holds that he ought to be punished. Accordingly she sends him to his room where his penalty is to write an endless number of lines. But the lad pleads with his mother. He volunteers to fill the wood-box with kindling, is prepared to fetch coal, and so on. Now the mother accepts his work in lieu of the task that he was to perform as punishment. Does any one suppose that the mother is encouraging Jimmy to be rude to his sister? Or is it possible that the little fellow believes that in future he may destroy other toys? Not at all. He was sorry for his fault and it was forgiven him. However, some punishment was meted out as a warning for the future. Shrewdly he offers to do some work

that will be helpful to his mother, and his punishment is remitted.

Here we have all the essentials of an indulgence. For an indulgence is a remission of temporal punishment due to sins that already have been forgiven. There is no encouragement to sin, for the recipient must be free from mortal sin. It is not a remission of sin itself, for it presupposes the sin to have been forgiven.

Certainly it is reasonable to believe that there is temporal punishment, either in this world or in the next, for our crimes, even though God has forgiven them. There is the case of David, who had sinned grievously against the Lord. His great sorrow for his sins found favor with God, and the Lord sent to him a prophet to announce that his sin had been forgiven. But nevertheless, a punishment followed as is apparent from the words of the prophet: "The Lord also hath taken away thy sin: thou shalt not die. Nevertheless, because thou hast given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blas-

pheme, for this thing the child that is born to thee shall surely die." (*2 Kings* xii, 13-14.)

One might object that in the case of sin it is not the Church who is offended, and that she does not inflict the punishment. By what right, then, does she presume to remit this punishment? By the right and the power given to her by God Himself. "Amen, I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven." (*Matt.* xviii. 18.) If these words of Our Saviour convey anything, they certainly confer upon the Church a power to bind and loose that is recognized in heaven. The power is unlimited, as the "whatsoever" signifies. We know that the Church cannot abuse this power, for Christ is with her, and the Holy Ghost guides her. And thus it is really God who grants the indulgences through the Church, whom He has appointed as the custodian of the spiritual treasures won by the Saviour and the saints.

The stand of the Church on the question of indulgences, far from bearing the stigma of abuse of power, is a most logical expression of the doctrine of the Communion of Saints. The saints in heaven, the souls in purgatory, and the militant Christians upon earth are united in holy coöperation for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls. The saints in heaven have stored up superabundant merits, and still continue, by their powerful intercession, to gain favors for the faithful on earth. These in turn apply their merits to the helpless souls in purgatory. Could the doctrine of the Communion of Saints find a more beautiful expression than in the practice of granting indulgences?

And now let us consider the kinds of indulgences and the significance of their names. We speak of *plenary* and *partial* indulgences. Plenary, as the word signifies, means a full remission of punishment due to sin. Thus, if a person in the state of grace would fulfill all the requirements to gain a plenary indulgence,

his standing before the throne of God would be such that if he were to die immediately afterwards he would escape the temporal punishments of purgatory. Human frailty, however, prevents many of us from fulfilling the necessary conditions. For that reason we try, and try repeatedly to gain plenary indulgences.

A partial indulgence, as the word intimates, remits a part of the punishment due to sin. In the early ages of the Church the faithful performed public penance for their sins. This penance sometimes was of short duration; then again it was carried on for years. Thus when you gain an indulgence of one hundred days, seven years, etc., as much punishment for your sins is remitted as if you had atoned publicly so many days or years.

But some one may say: "Thus far I have seen nothing objectionable about indulgences, but the thing that bears all the marks of simony is the fact that indulgences have been granted for the payment of money. Thus, for instance, the building of the magnificent basilica

of St. Peter's at Rome is said to have been accomplished with funds collected over the entire world; and these donations were given all the more freely because indulgences were offered."

Let us sanely consider the objection. For what purpose was that money destined? To build a fitting memorial to the Prince of the apostles; to erect a church that would be in keeping with the magnificence and sublimity of the religion of God. Where is the wrong? It was a work for the greater glory of God, a work that could only be consummated by means of money. Accordingly, the sacrifice made by the Christian people who contributed was an act of religion, and as such was as fully entitled to an indulgence as any prayer or act of mortification. Only those who studiously search for scandals can discover anything irregular in the granting of indulgences for works of this kind. And if ever individual bishops have attempted to grant indulgences as a means of strengthening their finances,

their abuse was criminal and as such severely condemned by the Church.

And thus we have seen that all the bugaboo talk about indulgences is forced and devoid of any substantiation in fact.

God is merciful. He is willing, yes, anxious to extend to us the fullness of His forgiveness, if we but manifest the least sign of good will. The doctrine of indulgences is only one of the many proofs of God's great mercy and magnanimity. We should strive to appreciate this gift of God and try to gain as many indulgences as possible.

CHAPTER XI

SPIRITUAL FLOWERS FOR THE DEAD

Temporal Punishment after Death. Prayers for the Dead

WHEN Leopold, King of the Belgians, died, many devout hypocrites took it upon themselves to heap abuse upon the head of the deceased monarch. The newspapers at the time went out of their way to revile his name, and some preachers brazenly declared from their pulpits that Leopold had been condemned to hell. It was the time when the world was horrified by the accounts of the alleged abuses in the Belgian Congo. We were told that the natives were treated worse than beasts; that for disobedience and similar failings the workers in the rubber groves were beaten and maimed for life by the unscrupulous Belgians. All

this abuse and crime was laid at the door of Leopold the King of the Belgians.

It is not for me to decide upon the guilt or innocence of the deceased king, but this is what I wish to emphasize: In spite of the fact that Leopold died conciliated to God and apparently sorrowing for his sins, the non-Catholic world condemned him, and not a few ministers condemned him to hell. This would seem to indicate that although we are sorry for our sins we are liable to punishment. And that exactly is the Catholic doctrine. We believe that a person who repents of his sins and uses the means to obtain forgiveness actually wipes out his crime and escapes hell, but that some temporal punishment is due to him either in this world or in purgatory. That Protestants unconsciously believe this is patent from the fact that they demanded punishment for Leopold even after he had striven to make his peace with God. Since they will hear nothing of a purgatory, they had no choice but to condemn him to hell.

Let us consider another case. A man lives for many years unmindful of the commandments of God. He lives as a creature of nature; gratifies every passion; neglects prayer and good works. Now, of a sudden, the danger of death appears. Some good person comes to him and teaches him the truths of God. He repents of his sins, uses the necessary means of grace, and is saved before the angel of death appears with the final summons. Do you believe that the many years of his sinfulness and utter disregard of the laws of God will go unpunished? Do you believe that he will, at once, obtain the same reward that others will receive who have labored hard and continuously to avoid sin? Common sense tells us that it is not fair. God's mercy great and magnanimous will save him from hell, but our reason demands some atonement for the sins of the past.

That is the doctrine of purgatory. It is based upon common sense, and supported by the infallible word of God. In the Second

Book of the Maccabees, chapter xii, verse 46, we read: "It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins." Now if the dead are in heaven, they do not need our prayers; if they are in hell, our petitions will not help them. Therefore, the Scriptures assume that there is another place of punishment from which the sufferers may be rescued by prayer.

How consoling is the thought that we are still united with our beloved dead in the Communion of Saints! But what a cold, un-Christian belief it is to suppose that there is no way of helping the dead, and that they are either damned or happy in heaven! It is safe to say that if the judgment passed upon Leopold by the world were to be applied to all others with crimes equally great, the arrivals at the gates of heaven would be "few and far between." Who of us can say that he has never sinned? Is it possible that the deathbed penitent is as much entitled to immediate glory as the man

or woman who has labored against many temptations to conscientiously fulfill the law of God? On the other hand, knowing God's infinite mercy and goodness, who would presume to condemn the sinner who, like the thief on the cross, in his last hour pleads for forgiveness?

Since, then, it is most reasonable to believe in purgatory, a place of temporal punishment for those who have died in grace but had not fully atoned for their sins, it follows as a corollary that we can be of aid to the suffering souls in purgatory. We have the assurance of the Scriptures to this effect; but we also have the teaching of the Church of God as our warranty.

Long before Martin Luther thought of rebelling against the Church, Masses were said and prayers offered up for the souls of the departed. And when another century rolls by it will find the Catholic Church still clinging to the same practice.

Some mischievous persons allege that the Catholic Church adheres to the doctrine of

purgatory and the efficacy of prayers for the dead in order not to lose the stipends for Masses. How ridiculous! In the Catholic Church the priest does not depend upon his popularity for his income. His salary is fixed by the bishop, and whether he is popular or not his means of sustenance are the same. Might not the bishop determine upon a higher salary and thus obviate the dependence of the priest upon free-will offerings? And is it not the practice of priests everywhere to encourage their people to pray for the dead? You seldom hear a priest ask for Masses. As a matter of fact, the faithful of their own accord bring more Mass intentions to the priest than he can say. It is nothing uncommon for priests in small parishes annually to send away many Mass intentions to the priests in the missions who have no other support. And, in the writer's own experience at least, the majority of Mass stipends are not for the dead, but for personal intentions. Try as you may to discredit the Catholic doctrine of purgatory, you

cannot overcome the reasonableness and truthfulness of the scriptural injunction: "It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins."

We have seen the caskets of the dead covered with flowers and wreaths, tokens of love and gratitude. But how soon these flowers wither and the wreaths become discolored! Our cemetery adjoins the church, and daily my duties lead me past the resting place of the dead. Here is the grave of one recently buried. A bunch of discolored, ugly-looking remnants of flowers lies above it. There I see the rusted frame of what was once a beautiful floral design. Thus a week or a few months have made our tokens of love ugly. How much more enduring would be a bouquet of spiritual roses plucked from the ever-bearing bush of the holy Rosary! How much more expressive of love a wreath of forget-me-nots made up of our daily ejaculatory prayers for the souls of our loved ones!

Let us banish from our churches the pagan custom of great pomp and display at funerals. Instead let us lay upon the caskets of our dear departed a spiritual bouquet, a promise to keep fresh their memory by daily prayer. Thus we are intimately united with our deceased relatives and friends, and they in turn, for they are friends of God, will storm heaven with petitions for our welfare and ultimate salvation.

CHAPTER XII

OUR MOTHER

Propriety of Devotion to the Blessed Virgin. How We Honor Her

To me it has been one of the most baffling mysteries of the world that the propriety of honoring and venerating the Mother of God should ever have been brought into question. On that memorable day when the Saviour hung on the cross, a bruised and crushed victim for the world's crimes, some of the last words spoken by Him were addressed to His Mother and St. John: "Woman, behold thy son. After that He saith to the disciple: Behold thy mother." (*John* xix. 26-27.) It has always been the belief of Christians that hereby the Blessed Redeemer constituted His Mother as the Mother of all Christians, and placed

the faithful of His Church under her special guidance and protection. But one might object that this interpretation is forced and not implied in the words. If not, how can we explain that Our Lord chose such an important moment, if He merely desired to provide for His Mother? An ordinary human being makes many requests upon his deathbed because he realizes that he will be unable to counsel and provide after the hand of death has touched him. But surely, no one will suggest that Our Saviour just happened to think of the needs of His Mother as He saw death approaching. No indeed. The solemnity of the occasion, as well as the publicity of the act indicated that here was something important and of interest not only to those who stood beneath the cross, but to the whole world.

For fifteen hundred years Christians the world over honored the Mother of God, sang her praises and joyously celebrated her feasts until the "Reformation" wrought its havoc in Christian beliefs and practices. To be sure,

Catholics continue to look to Mary as their Mother, and they offer her the love of dutiful children. But outside the Church her name is actually dishonored. Teachers of religion studiously avoid mentioning her name, not to speak of the utter absence of eulogy. They grow eloquent when speaking of the achievements of the great and glorious Washington and of the immortal Lincoln. But when, by some force of circumstances, they are compelled to mention the name of the Mother of the Saviour, they call her Mary without title or prefix. Whilst they may speak of the Mother of Jesus, she is not given the title of Mother of God. And why not? Is she not really and truly the Mother of God? Certainly she bore Jesus, and His human body was taken from her flesh. But are there two persons in Jesus? Absolutely no. There is a divine nature and a human nature; but the two are so intimately united that there is but one person, the God-man. Jesus is God; He is also the son of the Virgin Mary. Conse-

quently she is the Mother of God. As such does she not merit the honor and veneration that becomes a great personage? No man can honor her as God honored her. He bestowed upon her the marvelous miracle of grace by giving her motherhood together with unstained virginity.

Truly, then, she is the most sacred vessel in which the stainless body of the Saviour was contained. She is the Golden Gate through which He came into the world. Why should not the statues of her, who was one of the most illustrious personages in the history of Christianity, have a conspicuous place in our churches, just as our national heroes continue to live in their images placed in our federal buildings, in parks and public places?

However, I may be told: "Your exposition of the veneration of Mary is reasonable; but you fail to touch upon the most objectionable phase of Catholic devotion to Mary; to wit, you deify her and detract from God the honor and glory that belong to Him only." Surely

we do not detract from the magnificence of the sun by admiring the grandeur of the mellow moon which receives its light from the sun. But perhaps our prayers to the Blessed Virgin Mary give offense. Let us examine the most common prayer that is uttered every day by Catholics. It is the following: "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen." Surely the first part is orthodox, for it was first uttered by the angel Gabriel, announcing to the Virgin that she had been chosen to be the Mother of the Saviour. The second part is scriptural and proceeded from the mouth of the saintly Elizabeth. The third part of the prayer has been added by the Church. Note well, there is absolutely no indication of adoration or worship. We merely ask the Mother of God to pray for us. Is there anything unreasonable about this? Why yes, some one

will answer. Why pray to Mary when we can pray directly to God? Most assuredly you can and may directly ask God to grant your wants. But have you ever observed that when a child wants something that depends upon the kindness and consent of its father, it invariably goes to the mother first with the request? If the mother is inclined to favor the petition, she will lay it before the father? The child, this artful diplomat, knows that it will be more successful if its mother's aid is enlisted. That is exactly the position of the Catholic who prays to Mary. He expects his prayer to be answered by God; but realizing his unworthiness in the presence of the majesty of the Most High, he endeavors to gain the support of his Mother, whom he knows to stand high in favor at the court of heaven. One must do violence to one's better judgment to discover anything offensive or even unreasonable in the veneration of Mary, the Mother of God.

How, then, do Catholics honor the Blessed

Virgin Mary? We honor her by celebrating her feasts in memory of the honors and glories that God showered upon her. We honor her, furthermore, by giving a place of distinction to her images in our homes and in our churches. We honor her in prayer and song of praise. But most of all we glorify her name and extol her virtues by imitating them.

Right here let us record the fact that the Catholic Church can rightfully boast of her glorious Catholic womanhood. In a world that has taken away all the beauty and benediction of motherhood, Catholic mothers are for the great part faithful mothers, who not only bring glory to God by rearing God-fearing children, but their virtue and their fidelity constitutes the only hope for the future of nations. Whilst everywhere maidenly charm has given way to mannish mannerisms, and modesty has been supplanted by sex hygiene, the majority of Catholic girls are pure and good. And why? Because the Church has ever held up the Mother of God as the ideal

mother, after whom Catholic mothers should pattern their lives. Because she has always drawn her girls into intimate association with the virtues of the Virgin Most Fair, in order that they might learn to love humility and culture purity after the example of their great patroness and protector.

Truly God was signally generous and magnanimous when He sent to earth the lily "without taint in seed or bud." Not only was the purest Mother of Jesus the most important instrument in bringing the Redeemer to the world; but she herself has been a most potent means of bringing Redemption to mankind.

She prophesied: "All generations shall call me blessed." And from that happy day when she greeted Elizabeth and announced the joyful tidings of the great things that God had done to her, the name of Mary the Virgin has been the constant theme of song and praise. Her virtues have been the beacon lights guiding Catholic men and women through the darkness of unbelief and vice with which Satan

strives to becloud the pathway to eternal glory. And as long as a true Catholic heart beats in the breast of man, the glorious Mother of Christians will be honored and venerated.

CHAPTER XIII

THE THERMOMETER OF CHRISTIANITY

Origin of the Rosary. Its Nature and Beauty

IF you would gauge the quality of any Catholic's religious convictions, inquire about his attitude toward the Rosary. For although there is no obligation to say the Rosary, this wonderful prayer has, in truth, become a thermometer whereby we can know if a man's religion is warm and active, or cold and sluggish. You may be sure that the home in which the Rosary is loved and frequently recited is a home which bears the unmistakable signs of God's benediction. And, conversely, where the Rosary is despised, you will discover unhappiness, religious indifference, and sinful discord.

What, then, is this wonderful prayer that exercises such potent influence in the life of a Christian? Every Catholic knows that the Rosary is made up of our most common prayers. But not every Catholic knows its full beauty and value. Accordingly, we will strive to learn more about the Rosary so that it may be as dear to us as it has been to the saints, as also it was to the beloved devotee of the Mother of God, Pope Pius IX.

St. Dominic is given credit for its origin. It is said that in olden times the hermits, who could not recite the psalms of the Holy Office, instead said one Our Father and Hail Mary for each psalm. In order to note the number, they made use of little pebbles or other small objects like seeds. One hundred and fifty Our Fathers and Hail Marys were substituted for the one hundred and fifty psalms. Naturally enough, some one, probably St. Dominic, conceived the idea of stringing the beads on a cord. And thus our Rosary came into existence.

Now St. Dominic, about the year 1200, was commissioned by the Pope to preach against the heresies of the Albigenses, who had created much havoc in Christian circles in southern France and northern Italy. Meeting with little success, the saint appealed to the Helper of Christians. She commanded him to use the Rosary and to spread the devotion. From that day to the present the Rosary has grown in popularity, so that to-day every genuine Catholic carries his beads with him, and finds in this prayer a most powerful weapon against sin and a sweet consolation in distress.

Why should the Rosary be so pleasing to God and so beneficial to us? Because it contains the best and most beautiful prayers, and because it is most admirably suited to Christian needs, for in it we have, in reality, a compendium of the Gospel truths.

We begin with the sign of the cross—the cross, so dear to every true Christian, the emblem of our salvation, the Christian's badge, of which it is said, "in this sign thou wilt con-

quer." After you have kissed the crucifix and blessed yourself with it, you proceed to the profession of faith, the Apostles' Creed. The Rosary is a garland of most beautiful roses which we weave together of our repeated Aves. But the roses must bloom on the tree of faith. If your faith is lost, or if it is weak and anemic, the roses that you try to pluck will be devoid of beauty and fragrance. Roses cannot thrive on withered and worm-eaten branches. And oh, how necessary it is in our days that we frequently renew our profession of faith! In a hundred different ways the arch-fiend approaches us in order to rob us of our birth-right. Let him hear his condemnation: *Credo*, I believe; my holy Faith above all things on earth. Indeed, a more fitting opening prayer for the Rosary could not be found.

After reciting the Glory Be to the Father, the Our Father, and three Hail Marys for an increase of the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, we come to the body of the Rosary. We are to say one Glory Be to the

Father, one Our Father and ten Hail Marys for every decade of the Rosary, meditating the while upon the sublime mysteries of the religion of God. The ordinary beads used by Catholics have five decades. But there are three sets of mysteries upon which we meditate, accordingly as we wish to say the Rosary of the *joyful*, *sorrowful*, or *glorious* mysteries.

Let us begin with the joyful mysteries. While reciting the Hail Marys of the first decade, we meditate upon the mystery called the Annunciation. Our mind takes us back to that humble little home in Nazareth, where the archangel Gabriel found the Virgin Mary in prayer, and announced to her the glad tidings that she was chosen by God to be the mother of the Redeemer. We fancy we see the chaste young maiden as she protests against anything that might violate her vow of chastity. And as the wonderful plans of God are unfolded to her, we see her humbly acquiesce in the will of the Lord.

In the next mystery, the Visitation, we ac-

company her on the hazardous journey over the mountains to her cousin Elizabeth. Our knowledge of God's ways assures us that the Virgin is protected against the roving bands of brigands that infested the hills. And as she arrives at the house of Zachary and Elizabeth, we see her hasten to meet her cousin and confide to her the glorious news. In turn we note the look of exultation that comes over the countenance of Elizabeth as she realizes that the child which she bears has been sanctified by the presence of the Mother of God with her precious burden. We hear Elizabeth's salutation, "Blessed art thou among women," and the prophetic response, the *Magnificat*, from the lips of the Blessed Virgin.

As we pass on to the third decade, the sweet mystery of the Nativity is thrown on the screen of our heart. How gladly the true Christian welcomes the joyous sounds of Christmas bells! And with what happiness he hurries to church to live over again the happiness and sweetness of this great mystery! Truly the third de-

cade of the Rosary of the Joyful mysteries will be replete with beautiful and wholesome thoughts. In spirit we are carried to the fields of Bethlehem. We watch with the shepherds by their flocks; we, too, see the splendor of the angels and hear their message. And with the humble shepherds we hurry to the grotto to prostrate ourselves before the crib which holds the heavenly Infant.

Our ten Hail Marys finished, we begin another decade and the meditation of the Presentation in the Temple. The scenes of Bethlehem vanish. In their stead we find ourselves in the spacious vestibule of the one-time magnificent temple of Jerusalem. Joseph and Mary have made the journey to comply with the law. Poor though they are, they have brought with them a pair of doves as an offering. Then from somewhere in or about the temple come two old persons—the one Anna, a prophetess; the other Simeon, a good and holy man. Tears of joy are streaming down the cheeks of the silver-haired man of God.

For the Holy Ghost had promised him that he would see the Redeemer; and now it was made known to him that the happy hour had arrived. Lovingly and gently he takes the Divine Infant in his arms, and inspired by the Holy Ghost, prophesies His future greatness, as also Mary's sorrows.

The fifth decade, the Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple, takes us to a later period in Our Lord's life. He is twelve years old and accompanies His parents to Jerusalem. And alas, when the festivities are over, and the visitors have already covered a considerable part of the journey from Jerusalem to their homes, it is discovered that the child Jesus neither is to be found among the relatives and friends, nor does any one remember to have seen Him among the travelers. What anguish fills the hearts of Mary and Joseph! Can we imagine their feverish haste as they go hither and thither, searching everywhere and not finding Him? Finally, worn and tired, they return to the temple, and behold, there the boy

is seated among the doctors and learned men, teaching and explaining the Scriptures. And with the Blessed Virgin we recall again the message of the archangel at the Annunciation: "He shall be the Son of God."

The second series of meditations is called that of the sorrowful mysteries. Quite another set of scenes passes before us. You pray through the Blessed Virgin to Christ in order that you might obtain strength and assistance to travel your way of the cross, and before the vision of your soul there passes another Man of Sorrows, the Blessed Redeemer. You follow Him to Gethsemani, where you witness the Agony in the Garden, which is the first mystery. With the eyes of His omniscience you too see the sufferings that await Him—the cruel scourge, the crown of thorns, and the cross. And, like Him, you know that for thousands, yes, for millions, this suffering will be in vain. Present and future generations will despise the One who called Himself the King of the Jews. Only a small part of the

world's inhabitants will rejoice and thank Him for redemption. You now realize the cause of the agony and bloody sweat. But also you are overwhelmed with the proof of His divine love.

You follow Him as He is taken prisoner, and you soon see Him fastened to the pillar to be scourged. This is the second mystery. Robbed of His garments and exposed to the vulgar gaze of drunken soldiers, He is to be crushed under the vicious lash of the scourge. First a few small streams of blood trickle down over His body; but soon that sacred body is covered with blood flowing from numberless gaping wounds. As we pray, this picture is indelibly imprinted upon our soul, to be our strength in the time of temptation.

And as you say the Our Father of the third decade, you are prepared for the scene that is to follow, the third sorrowful mystery, the Crowning with Thorns. What vain and sinful thoughts sometimes occupy the human mind! To atone for these a plaited crown of

thorns is placed upon the Saviour's brow, the sharp points piercing His sacred head. As you pass from bead to bead devoutly reciting your Aves, this scene of your crowned Lord grips your heart and lends the greatest devotion to your prayer.

You pass on to the fourth mystery, the Carrying of the Cross. Devoutly you follow in the bloody imprints of His feet. And as you see Him plunge to the earth, borne down by the weight of the cross, you think of your frequent relapses into sin. Oh, if your prayer is fervent, and your meditation devout, will not the recital of the Rosary purify your soul and elevate you above the sordid things in life to the sublimity of the things of God?

You have arrived at Calvary, and you begin the meditation of the fifth of the sorrowful mysteries, the Crucifixion. In spirit you are taken back to the Calvary of old. You see the Blessed Mother standing near, though with eyes averted so as not to see the anguish suffered by her Son, as the iron nails are driven

through His hands and feet. Anon you see the cross raised aloft bearing the Holy Redeemer. The tortures of those last hours are vividly pictured in your mind. You hear His final cry and see His head fall upon His breast in death. Never again will you crucify your Lord by your sins.

But the wealth of the Rosary is not yet exhausted. The glorious mysteries offer a most fruitful theme for meditation and prayer. We have beheld the wondrous workings of God's plans in the birth and childhood of Our Lord. We walked with Him to Gethsemani; accompanied Him to the pillar; and followed in His footsteps on the sad journey to Calvary, where we heard His last cry as He died on the cross.

Let us now view His and His Mother's exaltation in the glorious mysteries. Whatever sadness may linger in our hearts from a contemplation of the sorrowful mysteries is at once dispelled by the first glorious mystery, the Resurrection. As we pray our Aves there

appears to us the risen Master, even as He appeared to Mary Magdalene and to the apostles. He has vanquished death, and has proven His divinity beyond all doubt. How consoling the thought that if I live according to His precepts, I too shall rise from the grave glorified and exceedingly happy! The thought of that resurrection gives me strength to shoulder the cross and joyfully assume His burdens.

In passing I see the fruitfulness of the great Forty Days after the Resurrection, and the second mystery presents to me the picture of the Ascension. With the apostles I accompany the Blessed Redeemer to the Mount of Olives. I hear His injunction to "teach all nations"; I see Him raise His hands in benediction, whilst He ascends into heaven. My heart is filled with yearning to go Home as He went Home, to the Father, to peace and to rest.

And again the scene is changed. The third mystery, the Descent of the Holy Ghost, recalls the wonderful things that transpired in

Jerusalem on the first feast of Pentecost. I see the apostles filled with the fire of the Holy Ghost, as they throw off their cowardice as one would cast aside a cloak, and fearlessly go forth to establish the kingdom of God on earth. What wondrous power is given to those who receive the Holy Ghost.

And now my prayerful meditation leads me to a consideration of the glories that crowned the sorrowful life of my Mother, the Virgin undefiled. The fourth glorious mystery recalls her Assumption into heaven. I do not see her die; for hers was a peaceful sleep from which she awoke with body and soul in heaven. I picture to myself the welcome she received in the celestial realms from the angels and saints, whose Queen she was. With what tender love her Son received her and led her to the Father and to the Holy Ghost.

Quite naturally I continue my meditations in the fifth glorious mystery, the Coronation of the Blessed Virgin in Heaven. I see her enthroned over the angels and saints. I hear

the angelic choirs filling the heavens with marvelous melody, singing the praises of the eternal God and of the Queen of heaven.

And now, dear reader, do you understand why we say that the Rosary is the most beautiful form of prayer? Do you realize the potency of this prayer to cleanse and purify the soul? Then, let the Rosary be your dearest possession. Recite it daily if possible, and you may be assured that its sweet consolation and the many blessings attached to it will amply repay any loss of time. The saintly Pope Pius IX was so greatly devoted to this form of prayer that he once declared that, in the whole of the Vatican, there was no greater treasure than the Rosary. His last words to the Christian world were: "Let the Rosary, this simple, beautiful method of prayer, enriched with many indulgences, be habitually recited of an evening in every household. These are my last words to you; the memorial I leave behind me."

CHAPTER XIV

THE BENEDICTION INEFFABLE

The Blessing of Our Eucharistic Lord of the Tabernacle

TO this day the memory of a blessing clings to me as vividly as on the day it was bestowed. I was preparing to leave home to finish my studies at a European university. When the day of leave-taking finally arrived, my father, taking holy water, made the sign of the cross on my forehead. Somehow the dread of a great journey and of the prospects of a long sojourn far away from home seemed to vanish. I felt convinced that the blessing of my father accompanied me and clung to me until I was able to return home as a priest of God.

It is only reasonable to suppose that a blessing properly given and with the right motives

is countenanced and approved by God. The blessing of Jacob by his aged father was productive of vast results. But above all, the blessing of priests, who have a special commission to bless and consecrate, will bring the benign benediction of God upon the people and things that they bless. And thus we bring our sacred images, our rosaries and various other articles to the priest to be blessed. In many countries the priests are requested by the faithful to bless their homes, their acres, and their cattle. And not seldom the Catholic priest will journey a great distance to lay his hands upon a sick child.

However, it is of another blessing or benediction that this chapter deals—I mean the Benediction Ineffable, the priceless blessing of Our Eucharistic Lord of the tabernacle. It cannot be possible that Catholics realize the grandeur and value of this benediction, else our churches would be filled to overcrowding at the afternoon and evening services.

It all looks so simple—a few burning candles

on the altar, the monstrance containing the Sacred Host on the throne, the priest kneeling in prayer or incensing the Blessed Eucharist, while from the choir loft the solemn and inspiring notes of the *O Salutaris* and *Tantum Ergo* rise and fall in rhythmical modulation. And yet, what a glorious privilege it is to kneel there and look up to the Blessed Host with faith and love supplanting what the eyes cannot see! Can we doubt but that the angels of heaven are hovering about the altar—that they too breathe forth a celestial *O Salutaris* and *Tantum Ergo*? Do we not believe that they rejoice in the privilege of being present in our churches and about our altars?

Oh, if we could lift the veil that hides the majesty and magnificence of the glorified Saviour! But no; our eyes would be dazzled, our hearts filled with fear at the sight of the majestic God whom we so often have offended. Fear and trembling would seize us. Our happiness it shall be some day to see this Beatific Vision with eyes that are no longer bound in

the flesh. But now, thank God that He has covered His majesty with the veil of the sacramental species. For our faith tells us that He is there; and we know that we could not see His glory and live. Far better for us that we cannot behold His splendor. For now we can confidently prostrate ourselves before His altar; now we can look up to Him, speak to Him, beseech Him for His guidance, and receive His answers in our heart.

The exquisite hymn of praise, the *Tantum Ergo*, is finished. The priest arises to chant the *Panem de coelo praestitisti eis*—"Thou hast given them the Bread from heaven." To which the choir responds: "*Omne delectamentum in se habentem*"—"Containing in itself every sweetness." Thereupon the priest chants the following oration:

"Let us pray. O God, who in this wonderful sacrament hast left us the memory of Thy passion: Grant us the grace, we beseech Thee, so to venerate the sacred mysteries of Thy body and blood, that we may fully perceive the fruit

of Thy redemption, who livest and reignest world without end.”

As the last note of the “Amen” dies out, the eyes of the faithful turn expectantly to the altar, where the priest, wearing the benediction veil over the cope, ascends the altar steps and takes down the monstrance from the throne. Covering his hands with the ends of the veil, for not he but Christ is blessing, he raises the monstrance aloft, making with it the sign of the cross. What a beautiful act of faith is here made, as silently and reverently the faithful bow their heads to receive Christ’s own blessing. As the light clouds of fragrant incense ascend to our God and King, the angels, too, are spreading before Him the sweet odors brought with them from heaven. Not a friend or father is blessing us, not a priest, but God Himself, from whom all blessings flow.

How fitting that on Sunday, the first day of the week, we should seek the blessing of God! Those of the faithful who forego some pleasure or relaxation in order to attend Benediction—

will they not take home with them the sweetness of God's blessing to lighten the burdens of the coming week and to make fruitful their endeavors?

Now I am asked, Is there any obligation to attend Benediction? Absolutely none. The blessing of the Saviour is given us unattended by commandment or precept. It is ours if we want it. But what must be the caliber of that man's religion who goes to church only when commanded under pain of mortal sin? Can our faith in the Real Presence be so weak and so anemic that we must needs be compelled to visit the house of God?

O sinful, material world, where is thy love? Where is thy faith? Where is thy desire for the soul's salvation, that thou canst so stupidly ask if there is an obligation to attend Benediction?

The almighty God in heaven, before whom as Judge you will one day stand as culprit, deigns to shower upon you His personal blessing in order that your trial before His tribunal

may be less severe. Take advantage of the glorious privilege. Go as often as possible to church when He is enthroned above the tabernacle and is lifted up to bless you. The memory of that sweet benediction will cling to you throughout the week. It will accompany you to your home and to your work. God will be with you.

CHAPTER XV

THE WAY OF THE CROSS

Its History. Manner of Observance

WITHOUT a doubt the Way of the Cross is a most acceptable devotion in the eyes of God. It is said that Our Blessed Lady daily visited the scenes of her Son's passion and death. Quite naturally, too, the pious Christians who could do so made pilgrimages to Jerusalem, to visit the places made sacred by the suffering Saviour. The Church could not do otherwise than encourage a devotion so fruitful and wholesome for the souls of men. Accordingly she granted numerous rich indulgences to those who visited the sacred scenes of Christ's passion, and meditated upon the sufferings of the Lord. However, very many Catholics were unable to go to Jerusalem, and when the Fran-

ciscan Fathers, in 1686, petitioned the Holy Father, Pope Innocent XI, for permission to erect indulgenced stations of the cross in their churches, the request was granted. Subsequently this privilege was extended to all Christians, so that to-day there are very few churches or chapels without the stations of the cross. In our churches we gain the same rich indulgences that were granted to the pilgrims who visited the actual scenes of the passion.

Of course, in order to gain the indulgences one must be in the state of sanctifying grace. But even if we should be unfortunate enough to be in mortal sin, this should not deter us from making the stations. On the contrary, there is all the more reason to undertake the pious little pilgrimage. For no man can devoutly meditate on the passion of Our Lord, portrayed as it is so vividly in the stations, and still desire to remain in sin. Indeed, as those scenes of suffering are reënacted before your eyes, the greatness of God's love is forcibly brought home to you. Your sins are no longer

looked upon as defects of human nature, but they loom up before you in their true light, examples of monstrous ingratitude and selfishness.

The fourteen stations of the cross represent the following episodes in that original way of the cross: (1) Christ condemned to death; (2) the cross is laid upon Him; (3) His first fall; (4) He meets His Blessed Mother; (5) Simon of Cyrene is made to bear the cross; (6) Christ's face is wiped by Veronica; (7) His second fall; (8) He meets the women of Jerusalem; (9) His third fall; (10) He is stripped of His garments; (11) His crucifixion; (12) His death on the cross; (13) His body is taken down from the cross; and (14) is laid in the tomb.

The indulgences are not attached to the pictures, but to the crosses above the pictures. Consequently the pictures are not necessary, but serve to aid the Christian in meditating devoutly. Neither is it necessary to say any particular prayers at the various stations. But

there should, if possible, be a separate meditation on every one of the fourteen scenes.

We begin at the first station, try to picture to ourselves the scene it represents and its significance. The lesson that it teaches may apply to ourselves and may reveal to us the malice of some fault. Then we kneel down and say some prayer, for instance, the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be to the Father. Every prayer-book contains prayers suitable for making the way of the cross. But no certain form of prayer is prescribed.

From the first station we go to the second, meditating again and praying, and thus from station to station until we have completed the entire course. Knowing that very rich indulgences are attached to this devotion, we should previously strive to dispose ourselves properly by an act of perfect contrition and by making the intention to gain all the indulgences.

Thus far we have presumed that the individual is making the way of the cross alone. But during Lent, and sometimes during mis-

sions, the priest, accompanied by two or four altar boys, goes from station to station, whilst the faithful remain in their pews. However, they gain the same indulgences, by devoutly following the meditation and prayer of the priest, that they would obtain if each and every one made the stations individually.

Realizing that the sick, the aged, and many others who cannot go to church would be deprived of one of the richest devotions of our religion, the Church, our benevolent mother, has provided also for these. A crucifix blessed for the purpose by a priest having the faculties is indulgenced just as are the stations of the cross. The conditions are that you hold the crucifix in your hand and say the Our Father, and Hail Mary fourteen times, then the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be to the Father five times, then again once each for the Pope's intention. If one person holds the crucifix, others present may, by fulfilling the same conditions, gain the indulgences. What a boon this indulgenced crucifix is to

Catholic prisoners, soldiers, mariners, and invalids!

It is a very salutary practice to say the stations of the cross frequently. No better preparation can be made for holy communion. Indeed, the fact that we know that the Church has enriched this devotion with richer indulgences than any other pious practice, demonstrates that it is considered one of the most beneficial for the soul. If only we could frequently lead the men and women of the world on the journey of our Lord's sorrows, how much better they would be, and how much more happy and peaceful would be this world of ours! We Catholics, at least, ought often to be seen making the stations of the cross. There we are strengthened to withstand the temptations that daily assail us. There, too, we can repair the wrong that hourly is being done to the Sacred Heart of Jesus by the wholesale crimes of a material, unbelieving world.

CHAPTER XVI

A REMEDY FOR A SICK WORLD

History of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart. Manner. Reward.

THE world is sick. She suffers from a most serious malady, one that foreshadows death. And the nature of the disease? It is apostasy from Christ. He, the Saviour, who came to befriend the world, to bring to mankind the greatest gifts within the power of an omnipotent God, has been banished from our public life. The nations have decreed that the name of Jesus has no place in public records; that it should not be mentioned in covenants and treaties; and that, for all practical purposes, Christ might just as well be non-existent.

Not only has God been driven out of our public life, not only has He been banished from

the schools, but He is refused entrance into the homes; yes, even the hearts of men are barred against Him. His religion has been dissected by the erring hands of human beings, and under the guise of Christianity rationalism, materialism and atheism have taken the place of the eternal truths.

Truly the world is sick. Her sickness is no longer a secret. Countless symptoms, such as the restlessness of peoples, the absence of any hope for lasting peace, the hatred, jealousy, rivalry and greed of nations and individuals are but manifestations of the dread nature of the terrible malady. Is there a cure? There is one—the remedy offered by the Great Physician, Christ Himself. Many years ago He saw the unmistakable trend of society, and He proposed to the world the wonderful devotion to His Sacred Heart.

We might truthfully say that the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is as old as the Church. For, beginning with the love of St. John for this Great Heart, we might trace

the devotion throughout the centuries. It must be admitted, however, that the great devotees of the Sacred Heart who lived before the time of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, such as St. Gertrude and St. Francis de Sales, never penetrated into the full meaning and wealth of this devotion.

As the Lord usually chooses the most humble of His children as the instruments of His works, so also we find that He sought out the simple nun in the convent of Paray le Monial in France. This was about the middle of the seventeenth century.

Now what is the object of our adoration in this devotion? Is it the heart itself, or is it the great love of Jesus? For answer, let me narrate to you the story of the first apparition of Our Lord to St. Margaret Mary. She had lived many years in the convent, when one day, as she was praying before the Blessed Sacrament, Our Lord appeared to her and allowed her to behold His Sacred Heart as it shone radiantly in His open breast. It was

completely surrounded by flames, as brilliant as the sun and as transparent as crystal. Around it was wound a crown of thorns; while a cross surmounted the whole. Revealing the miracles and mysteries of His unbounded love, He addressed her as follows: "My heart is so full of love for mankind that it can no longer contain its flames of love. It must, through thy instrumentality, pour them forth and make them known to men, in order to enrich them with the treasures which it contains. I will make known to thee the wealth of these treasures; they are wholesome and sanctifying graces, which alone can rescue men from the abyss of ruin."

It will be seen at once that the object of the devotion is not merely the great love of Jesus; nor only the heart of flesh; but that it is the love and the heart that we adore: the love as contained in His great heart, and the heart as the symbol of that love. One might ask: Is the human heart of Jesus a worthy object of adoration, or do we incur the guilt of idolatry?

Indeed this heart is worthy of adoration, and we may confidently adore it. For in Christ the humanity and divinity are so intimately united in the one person, that the heart of Jesus is, in truth, a divine heart, and thus a most worthy object of adoration.

It would take us too far to recount here the many wondrous revelations made by Our Lord to St. Margaret Mary. Suffice it to say that He desired and demanded that this devotion be spread far and wide as the means of saving society from sin and apostasy. Throughout the many revelations there always recurs the bitter complaint of the ingratitude of mankind. And Our Saviour demands reparation for the many offenses against His Sacred Heart, for the coldness and indifference toward His Church, His sacraments, and, above all, the Holy Eucharist. Accordingly the devotion consists chiefly in acts of love and reparation to the Sacred Heart. The fact that from this devotion a great number of prayers and forms of adoration have arisen is proof sufficient that

it has found a hearty welcome in the Catholic world. We have the holy hour, acts of love, a scapular, a rosary of the Sacred Heart, a society for the Communion of Reparation, the League of the Sacred Heart, litanies, novenas, and prayers without number.

It will be apparent that no one is expected to join every association that honors the Divine Heart; neither must we strive to take part in all the forms of prayer. What appeals to the one, may not be suited to the individuality of the other. We should practice those devotions whereby we can best fulfill the wishes of Our Lord.

Aside from the fact that the widespread devotion to the living Heart of Jesus cannot but have a most wholesome effect upon the whole world and elevate the standards of morality, as well as bring God back into the hearts of men, this devotion carries with it such a wealth of promises as never before accompanied an act of adoration. There are principally twelve promises made by Our Lord to St. Margaret:

1. I will give them all the graces necessary for their station in life.
2. I will give peace to their families.
3. I will console them in all their sufferings.
4. I will be their sure refuge in life, and especially at their death.
5. I will pour abundant blessings over all their undertakings.
6. Sinners will find in My Heart the source and the infinite sea of mercy.
7. Careless souls will become zealous.
8. Zealous souls will rapidly attain great perfection.
9. I will bless the homes in which the picture of My Sacred Heart is erected and venerated.
10. To priests I will give the grace to move even the hardest hearts.
11. The names of those who try to spread the devotion shall be inscribed in My Heart, and never be erased therefrom.
12. (The so-called great promise.) In the overflowing mercy of My Heart I

promise thee that My all-powerful love will grant the grace of penitence at the end of life to all those who, on the first Fridays of nine consecutive months, receive Holy Communion. They will not die without grace, nor without the sacraments, for in this last moment My Sacred Heart will be their sure refuge.

What a wealth of grace and blessing is here promised to all who promote the devotion to the Sacred Heart! Can there still be a doubt whether or not you, dear reader, will become a most zealous apostle of this thoroughly Catholic practice?

The things of earth are so small and trivial when compared to the things of God. Lack of time or lack of inclination must not keep us away from this splendid means of sanctifying ourselves and of promoting the well-being of the world about us.

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